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A history of Alorese (Austronesian) combining linguistic and oral history

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General introduction

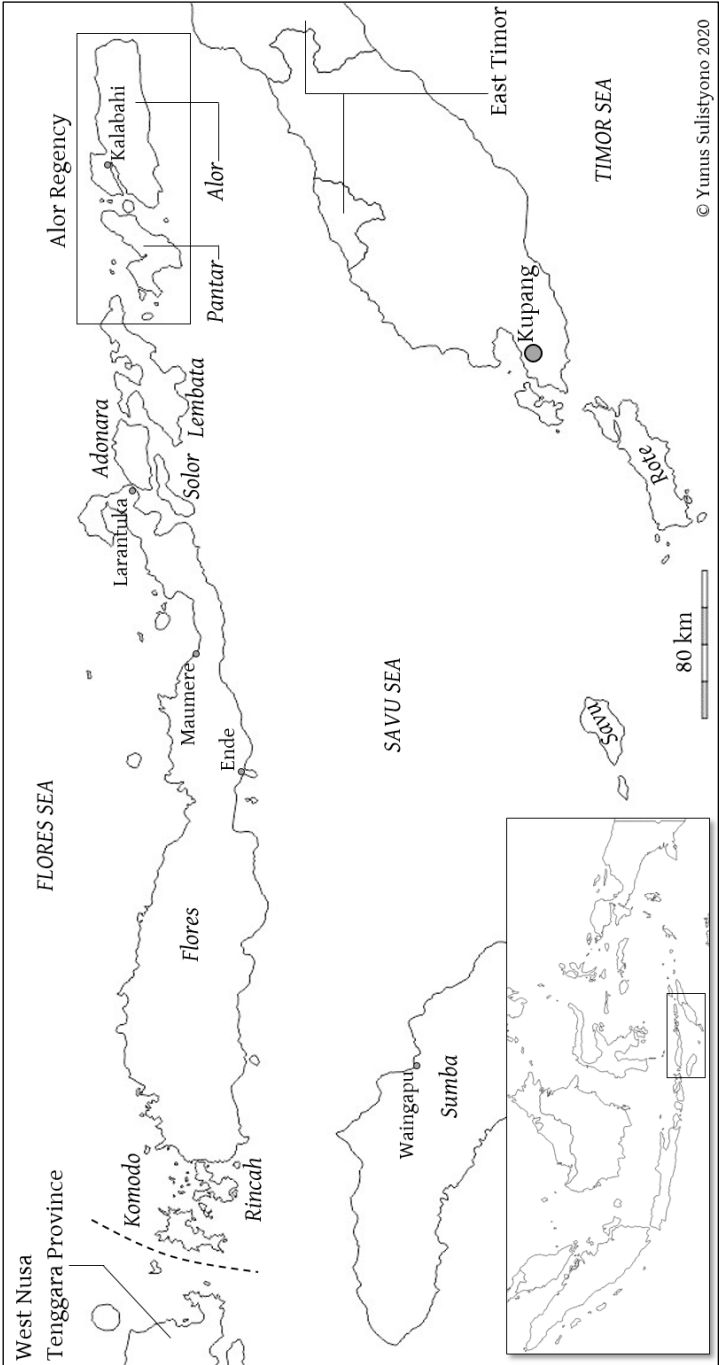
1.1 Overview

This research aims to provide a description of the history of Alorese (Indonesian: *Bahasa Alor*; ISO 639-3: aol), an Austronesian language spoken in eastern Indonesia, drawing on both linguistic and oral history. As the name indicates, Alorese is associated with the Alor archipelago, where at least 20–25 local languages are spoken (Klamer, 2017:1; Stokhof, 1975:8). Alorese is unique within the Alor archipelago in two domains; namely, language history and religion. It is the only Austronesian local language in a region where most of the local languages are non-Austronesian or ‘Papuan’ and belong to the Timor-Alor-Pantar family.¹ Moreover, most of the speakers of Alorese are coastal Muslims, surrounded by the inland majority Christian speakers of the Alor-Pantar (AP) languages.

Alorese is spoken in the administrative Regency (Indonesian: *kabupaten*) of Alor in the Indonesian province of East Nusa Tenggara (see Figure 1.1). This province is vast, with a landmass eight times larger than Bali, and is inhabited by around 5.5 million people (BPS NTT, 2020). The Alor Regency, encompassing the islands of Alor and Pantar in the northeast of East Nusa Tenggara (Figure 1.2), has a population of 215,512 inhabitants and a total landmass of 2,865 square kilometers (Kemendagri, 2019:2314).

¹ The non-Austronesian languages in the Alor archipelago are often referred to by the umbrella term ‘Papuan’, even though they do not form a genealogical unit with languages spoken on the island of Papua/New Guinea.

Figure 1.1: The Indonesian province of East Nusa Tenggara



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The ancestors of the Alorese people were migrants from islands further west. It is estimated that they came to Alor at least half a millennium ago (Anonymous, 1914:7; Barnes, 2001:280; Klamer, 2011:10; Lemoine, 1969:5–23; Rodemeier, 2006). Since then, more offshore arrivals have come at different times to different places in the coastal areas of the Alor-Pantar islands. Moreover, the Alorese community has been shaped by contact with the inland population of non-Austronesian speakers through trade and intermarriage.

Within the predominantly Christian population of East Nusa Tenggara province, the Alorese form a minority Muslim group. However, they are not the only coastal Muslim community in this province. Similar groups can be found along the coast of Lembata (Fricke, 2019:6), as well as other Indonesian provinces, such as West Papua and Maluku (Onim, 2006:83; Wanggai, 2009:51–77). Groups like these are typically linked to the sixteenth century trading empire of Ternate in North Maluku. From Ternate, Islam spread slowly and sporadically across eastern Indonesia, including to Alor and Pantar (Pringle, 2010:25).

The Alorese language has been included in the Western Lamaholot (WL) subgroup of the Flores-Lembata family (Fricke, 2019). Other languages of the WL subgroup are spoken in the Regency of East Flores, located west of the Alor Regency (see Figure 1.1). Alorese was once classified as a dialect of Lamaholot (Stokhof, 1975:9), but can be considered a separate language due to the low percentage of shared core vocabulary (Klamer, 2011:18, 2012a:74). Alorese shares around 60% of its basic vocabulary with Lamaholot (Klamer, 2011:17; Sulistyono, 2015:100).

Alorese and WL languages have a relatively low level of mutual intelligibility. Barnes (1996:3) reported that the Lamaholot speakers could understand Alorese; however, based on my observations during fieldwork, the Alorese speakers are not able to understand Lamaholot, with the Lamaholot dialect on Solor being particularly unintelligible to Alorese speakers. Nevertheless, linguistic evidence suggests a common ancestor with Lamaholot languages in the near west in the not so-distant past. A phoneme inventory and several lexical items have been reconstructed for Proto-Flores-Lembata (PFL; Fricke, 2019). PFL is the closest common ancestor of WL and Alorese that has been reconstructed.

However, narrative accounts of Alorese oral history do not agree with the linguistic history. The oral history of the Alorese people is quite well-preserved in the community. The locals, particularly members of clans that have high social status, generally consider themselves descendants of the prominent Javanese empire known as *Majapahit*. By combining linguistic history and oral

history approaches, this research aims to shed light on the history of Alorese.

This dissertation consists of seven chapters: an introduction (Chapter 1), a presentation of the methodology used in this research (Chapter 2), a discussion of migration stories (Chapter 3), a sketch grammar (Chapter 4), a study of Alorese historical phonology (Chapter 5), an investigation into loanwords (Chapter 6), and conclusions (Chapter 7). The chapter on migration stories describes the history of the Alorese from the perspective of oral history as well as documented stories about the people's ancestral migration. The sketch grammar chapter provides a synchronic description of Alorese. The chapter on historical phonology reconstructs the linguistic history of Alorese in connection to its sister languages in the WL subgroup. Lastly, the chapter on loanwords reveals patterns of contact between Alorese and the surrounding non-Austronesian languages, based on their lexicons.

The ultimate goal of this dissertation is to reconstruct the history of Alorese through the synthesis of the results from Chapters 3, 5, and 6. Moreover, this dissertation contributes to the documentation of the linguistic diversity in Indonesia through the sketch grammar in Chapter 4.

The present chapter is an introduction to this dissertation and is structured as follows. Section 1.2 presents the research questions and aims of this dissertation. In Section 1.3, I describe the geography of the Alorese-speaking area on Alor, the Buaya-Ternate islands, Pantar, and the western islands. In Section 1.4, I provide background information on the Alorese people, including their livelihoods, religion, and social structure. A description of the Alorese pre-colonial and post-colonial history is given in Section 1.5, which also contains a historical description of the spread of Islam in the Alorese community.

1.2 Research questions and aims

It has been suggested that Alorese split from Lamaholot around 600 years ago (Klamer, 2011:10, 2012a:101). Since their arrival on Pantar, the Alorese speakers have spread into many pockets on the Alor-Pantar islands. The language has undergone much grammatical simplification due to second-language learning (Moro, 2018, 2019). Against this backdrop, several research questions and aims are formulated.

Chapter 3 on oral history aims to describe oral accounts of the history of Alorese through careful readings of transcribed interviews with the Alorese traditional leaders. The oral accounts are focused on the stories of migration of the Alorese people's ancestors. The research questions guiding the investigation were as follows.

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- 1) Which historical events are regarded as being key in the migration stories of the Alorese people?
- 2) Do the various Alorese clans and villages share a common narrative with regard to their migration history?
- 3) How do the specific narratives of the various Alorese clans correlate with the migration history?

Questions (1) and (2) relate to the reconstruction of the history of the Alorese migration based on key events that are believed by the locals to have taken place in the past. A chronology is constructed based on the correlation among these events. Question (3) focuses on how the histories of specific clans within the Alorese community correlate with the migration history in forming the chronology.

Following the description from the perspective of oral history, in the remaining chapters the history of Alorese is approached from a linguistic perspective. Chapter 4 provides a grammatical description of an Alorese variety spoken in the northeast Pantar area. The description includes phonology, noun phrases, possessive constructions, verbs, clauses, sentence types, and clause combinations. This grammatical description serves as an introduction to the characteristics and features of the language.

Chapter 5 investigates the historical phonology of Alorese in comparison with varieties of WL within the Flores-Lembata family, guided by the following research questions.

- 4) How are the Proto-Flores-Lembata (PFL) proto-sounds reflected in the WL varieties including Alorese?
- 5) Is there evidence for Alorese being an innovation-defined subgroup within WL?

Question (4) focuses on the reflexes of PFL sounds reconstructed by Fricke (2019) in the current Alorese varieties and in a selection of WL varieties. Question (5) aims to survey the evidence for considering Alorese as a separate subgroup within the WL subgroup. In addition, I address possible evidence that, within the Alorese subgroup, another low-level grouping can be established.

Lastly, Chapter 6 focuses on the Alorese lexicon by examining loanwords from AP languages, as well as from Malay, Portuguese, and Dutch. In addition, this chapter also examines Alorese loanwords into AP languages. The following research questions are addressed in Chapter 5:

- 6) Which AP words are borrowed into Alorese and which AP languages are the main donors?
- 7) Which Malay, Portuguese, and Dutch words are borrowed into Alorese?
- 8) Which Alorese words are borrowed into AP languages and which AP languages are the recipients?
- 9) What does the distribution of loanwords in the Alorese varieties and their neighboring AP languages indicate about contact history?

There are two main themes in Chapter 6: (1) discussion of the loanwords in Alorese from external sources and (2) identification of loanwords that are borrowed from Alorese into AP languages. In that chapter, I propose that lexical evidence confirms contact scenarios between the Alorese people and AP speakers that were hypothesized in previous studies on Alorese.

1.3 Geographic description

The administrative Regency of Alor has two main islands: Alor and Pantar. These two islands are among the eastern-most islands in the Lesser Sunda island chain. As shown in Figure 1.1. Alor's closest neighbor to the west is the Lembata Regency. To the south, it borders Timor Island, which also includes the country of East Timor. The eastern border of the Alor Regency is formed by Wetar Island in the Maluku Province and Atauro Island of East Timor. Finally, its northern border is the Flores Sea. The capital of the Alor Regency is Kalabahi, which can be reached from the provincial capital of Kupang by daily flight and ferry connections.

This section describes the geography of the area where the Alorese speakers live. The area encompasses the coastal parts of the Alor Peninsula, the northern coasts of Pantar, and several small surrounding islands. Figure 1.3 is a language map that shows the Alorese speaking area, while Figure 1.4 shows the location of the Alorese villages. In the following sections, I describe the geography of the Alorese area on Alor (§1.3.1), Buaya and Ternate (§1.3.2), Pantar (§1.3.3), and the western islands (§1.3.4).

Figure 1.3: Language map of Alor and Pantar (Edwards, 2017)

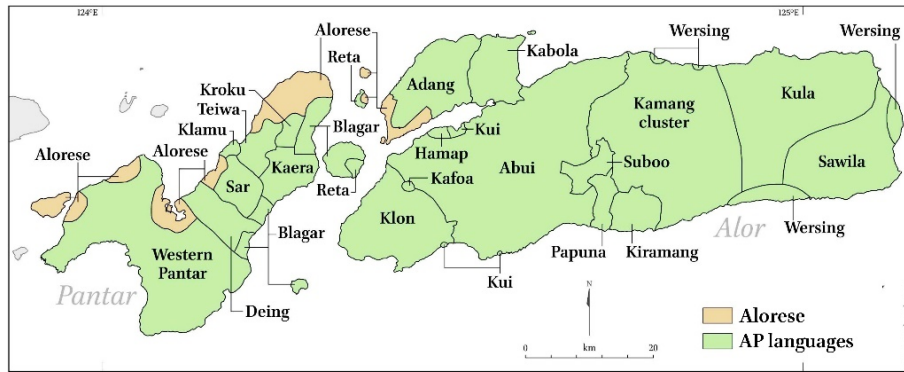
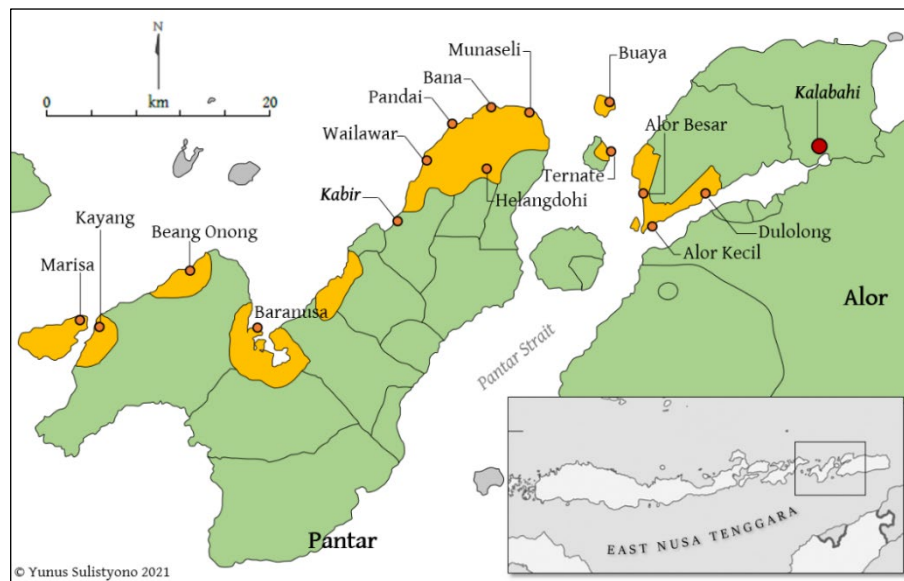


Figure 1.4: Locations of the Alorese villages



1.3.1 Alor

The Alorese area on Alor covers the western coast of the Alor Peninsula. Here, Alorese villages are built near the sea and form a chain along the coast. A road connects the capital city of Kalabahi to the Alorese villages. On Alor, the distance from one Alorese village to another ranges from 1–5 kilometers. There are three main Alorese villages: Dulolong, Alor Kecil, and Alor Besar. These coastal villages are located just below some relatively steep and green hills, of

which the highest point is around 800 meters above sea level. Alor is generally a fertile island. Although it is possible to create fields and grow crops, flat land is rare on the coast. Therefore, crops in this area are usually grown on sloped agricultural fields.

On Alor, it is relatively easy to reach the Alorese villages, which lie within one hour's travel of the capital city Kalabahi. The main road from Kalabahi runs along the northern coast, while the local houses are built around or slightly above the road and on the hillside. Travel in this area is possible with public transportation, such as minibuses (local Malay: *oto*) and motorbikes (Indonesian: *ojek*). Electricity in the villages may be available during both day and night, but more often during the night.

1.3.2 Buaya and Ternate

The Alorese people also live on two small islands called Buaya and Ternate² which are situated in a strait between Pantar and Alor. Buaya Island is inhabited by about one thousand Alorese people. The Alorese people there rely on access to the Alor Peninsula to transport fresh water by boat. In Indonesian, the term *Buaya* means 'crocodile' and, according to some, the island is named thus because it looks like a giant crocodile's head when seen from afar. Buaya is known for its traditional woven products which attract domestic and international tourists. Figure 1.5 below shows the waterfront of the Alorese village on Buaya looking towards Ternate Island in the Pantar Strait.

Figure 1.5: Ternate Island seen from Buaya



² Note that the Ternate Island in Alor is different from the famous Ternate Island in North Maluku.

On Ternate, the Alorese people share the island with speakers of the Reta language (ISO 639-3: ret), a non-Austronesian language. An Alorese village, called Ternate Uma Pura is located on the eastern side of the island. There is a public well in this village, giving easy access to fresh water. Sea currents from the north bring strong waves towards the village, which makes docking and disembarking boats challenging.

In the Pantar Strait there is also a small white sand island, called Kepa, situated near Alor Kecil village. This island is used as a dive resort and is frequently visited by tourists from Indonesia and abroad alike. However, there are no villagers living permanently on Kepa.

1.3.3 Pantar

Most of the Alorese villages on Pantar are located near the sea, except the village of Helangdohi, which is located on a hilltop in the northeastern part of the island. This part of the island is relatively greener and more fertile compared to the western part. Figure 1.6 shows the northeast Pantar area, seen from a boat traveling along the west side of the island. The villages Pandai and Wailawar are indicated in the picture. In addition, Figure 1.7 shows the western part of Pantar, seen from hills in central Pantar. The location of the villages Baranusa and Beang Onong can be seen in this picture.

Figure 1.6: The northeastern part of Pantar and two villages, Pandai and Wailawar

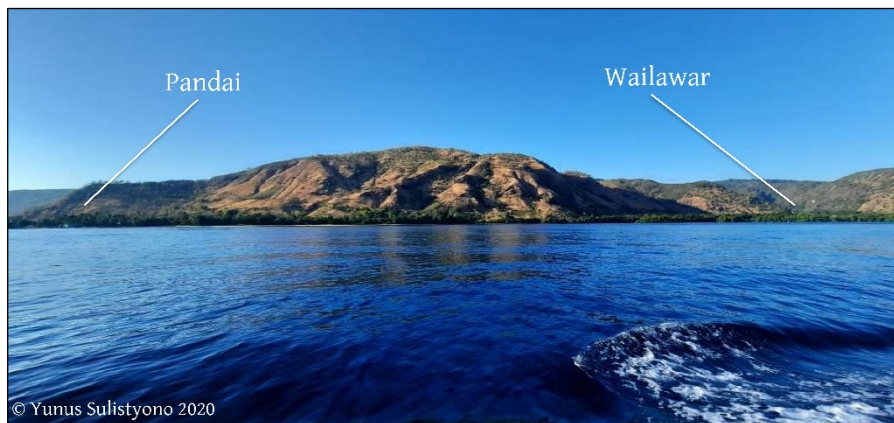


Figure 1.7: The western part of Pantar and two villages, Baranusa and Beang Onong



Similar to Alor, crops in this area are grown on sloped agricultural fields, although growing vegetables in a home garden has become more common recently. Burning land is a common practice to create agricultural fields. Temperatures on the coast are much warmer than on the hilltops. Water supply has always been an issue on Pantar because the island is generally very dry. Residents who own wells have easier access to water, while others need to go to a public water pump to obtain water. In several places, such as the villages of Kabor and Wailawar, pipe lines have been installed to transport water to houses and fields.

During my fieldwork, travel to Pantar was only possible by sea. An airport is still under construction and is set to begin operating in the coming years. Several sea routes are possible, for example, from Kalabahi to Baranusa, there is a daily boat that transport people and small vehicles, such as motorbikes, and there is also a weekly ferry that transport large vehicles, such as cars and trucks. From Alor Kecil, there is a daily boat to Munaseli. The trip from Kalabahi to Baranusa takes around 5–6 hours, while the trip from Alor Kecil to Munaseli takes around 1 hour. These trips are relatively safe during the dry season, but difficult during the rainy season.

Physical infrastructure on Pantar is still not well developed. The roads on the coast are mostly in poor condition, but some more substantial roads have been constructed in the village of Baranusa, connecting a sea port in the village with the neighboring villages to the south. On Pantar, there is no overland public transportation and *ojek* is only available on demand. This situation makes overland travel more difficult, which is compounded by the longer distance from one village to another, which is between 3–8 kilometers. Therefore, many

people choose to travel by boat to reach different places on the island. Electricity is produced by generators and is only regularly available during the night.

1.3.4 The western islands

In the west, a small island called Kangge is inhabited by a group of a few hundred Alorese villagers who named their village Marisa.³ This village is just 15 minutes by fishing boat from the village of Kayang on the Pantar mainland. Kangge Island is generally dry; since fresh water is therefore scarce on the island, fresh water must be transported from Pantar by boat. In addition, each home usually has aboveground water reservoirs. There is also livestock such as goats and cows on the island. Figure 1.8 below shows the Alorese village of Marisa on Kangge Island, seen from a fishing boat while crossing the strait between Pantar and Kangge.

Figure 1.8: The Alorese village Marisa on Kangge Island



To the west of Kangge, there are two small uninhabited islands, namely Rusa and Kambing. The Alorese sometimes go to these islands to hunt animals.

³ The place name *Marisa* can cause confusion. There are two Alorese villages situated close to each other, named *Kayang* and *Marisa*; the former is located on the Pantar mainland, while the latter is located on Kangge Island. Within the village *Kayang*, there is a sub-village which is also named *Marisa*, as marked on the map in Figure 1.2. In this dissertation, I use *Kayang* to refer to the village on the Pantar mainland and *Marisa* to refer to the village on Kangge Island.

To the northwest of Pantar, there are also two small islands, called Lapang and Batang. Lapang is a flat sandy island, of which a large part is submerged. This island produces seaweed. The Alorese people from western Pantar have built semi-permanent houses on this island to stay in when they want to harvest the seaweed. Batang Island is a steep mountain island and is also uninhabited. The Lapang-Batang Islands are known for a legend in living memory about a disastrous tsunami that struck the islands and forced people living there to flee to Lembata (§3.4.5).

1.4 The Alorese people

1.4.1 Livelihood

Most Alorese people are fishermen and farmers. The men often go to sea to fish, while the women take care of household chores and often work in their home gardens. The fishermen sell their catch at a weekly market or have it sold to buyers in the neighborhood or from the regency capital, Kalabahi. Among the locals in Alor, the waters around Pantar are known for their abundant catches. Fish sellers are often found walking around in villages selling what they have caught. In home gardens, the most commonly grown crops are maize, tubers, and peanuts. In addition, mustard greens, onions, and fruits such as banana, lime, and papaya are also grown in home gardens. Some of these products are grown for self-consumption, while some are sold at the weekly market, which is held alternately in different villages.

The daily work of the Alorese people varies considerably between the people living in western Pantar, northeast Pantar, and Alor. In western Pantar, another source of income besides fishing and farming is cultivating seaweed. People often go to Lapang Island to harvest seaweed and sell it to buyers from elsewhere in the Indonesian archipelago, such as Makassar in Sulawesi. In addition, some Alorese people in western Pantar go to nearby small islands to hunt for deer or wild goat. In northeast Pantar and in Alor, most of the Alorese people rely on fishing and farming, while others rely on home businesses, such as selling household items or weaving cloth. The Alorese have a long-established weaving tradition and their woven products are wellknown regionally, nationally, and among international tourists. It is common to find tourists coming to Alor to buy woven cloth. Other occupations of the Alorese include civil servants, *ojek* drivers, and teachers.

More groups of Alorese people can also be found in the regency capital, Kalabahi. In the city, they sell their catches of fish and woven cloth. Moreover, Alorese people can also be found in other places, such as Kokar in the northern

part of the Alor Peninsula. Several Alorese people can also be found selling their goods nearby tourist attractions, such as Takalelang village in central Alor.

Some members of the Alorese younger generation go to the city for education. Some even go further to other parts of Indonesia, such as Java and Sulawesi, for either work or education. A few decades ago, the Alorese young generation were inclined to drop out of school and sail overseas (Alorese: *bua*) to look for work (Gomang, 1993:42). However, sacrificing school for work is not common anymore. Today, the younger generation prefers to go to the regency capital or other places in the country to pursue higher education and to look for jobs.

1.4.2 Religion

The Alorese people are predominantly Muslim, especially the residents of the coastal villages. They converted to Islam in the sixteenth century, when preachers from Maluku in the north came to spread the religion (Kersten, 2017; Rodemeier, 2010). In the village of Munaseli, the Alorese Muslims and Christians live side by side. One hill top village, Helangdohi, has a majority Christian population. The Christian religion arrived on Alor-Pantar in the seventeenth century (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008:83). In many parts of the Indonesian archipelago, it is typical that communities living on the coast (Indonesian: *pesisir*) are Muslim, while those living in the mountains are Christian (Vickers, 1987:35, 57). This also holds for the Alor-Pantar islands. In addition, it must be noted that the Alorese are not the only coastal Muslim community in the Alor-Pantar area; several other non-Alorese speaking coastal communities, such as Blagar and Kui, also adhere to Islam (Windschuttel & Shiohara, 2017:111).

Although Islam is the most prominent religion in the Alorese community, remnants of local religion still exist. On the hill in the village of Helangdohi, the *ketua adat* 'traditional leaders' still live in a *rumah adat* 'ceremonial house', a traditional house used for ceremonial purposes. Every year, there is at least one occasion where the *ketua adat* hold a traditional ceremony, either to renovate the *rumah adat*, or to open land for the cultivation of crops. These occasions are usually attended by representatives from other villages along the coast. Moreover, in many villages across Alor and Pantar, people believe in the existence of mythical creatures from the forest, rivers, and seas. Traditional medical practitioners help the sick by asking for guidance from these mythical creatures (Gomang, 1993:48). In Kayang, the villagers often go to the *ketua adat* to ask for help when they experience difficulties in life. In addition to traditional beliefs, the Alorese people hold very tightly to the covenants made by their ancestors. For example, in Marisa, when people are fishing and they land on the

soil of another community, they are allowed to drink the water from the coconuts on the trees, but are not allowed to take the coconuts away.

1.4.3 Sociocultural life

The Alor-Pantar region has been known for many centuries as a region rife with local conflicts, including wars among ethnic groups and between the local people and the western colonizers (Gomang, 1993:3). This situation has shaped the Alorese social structure, which is largely based on a clan system. In almost every Alorese village, there are clans with specific roles in the community. One clan has the role of community leader, referred to as the *Raja* 'king' clan. One clan has the role of the village guard or army troop, and is usually referred to with the term *Kapitang*, a loanword from Portuguese (*capitã* 'captain'). Several other clans have additional roles, such as religious preachers, law enforcers, and carpenters. Apart from these clans, there are clans that comprise members of groups who arrived later, such as people from Maluku or Sulawesi who came to Alor and formed their own clans.

The Alorese people mostly live on the coast with the exception of the hill top village in northeast Pantar. In the past, the first Alorese settlers occupied the coastal area and lived off marine products. It is probable that they lived nomadically around coastal Alor-Pantar before finally settling in several pockets along the northern coasts. In later developments, many groups from other islands, such as the Moluccans, the Solorese, and the Makassarese, came to the area and merged with the Alorese people. In addition, marriages between the coastal Alorese people and the mountain AP speakers also shaped the Alorese community we see today.

The relationship between the coastal Muslim Alorese people and the inland indigenous AP speakers has been described as consisting of 'mutual distrust and fear' (Nicolspeyer, 1940:8; Du Bois, 1960). This used to be the norm, of course, as this area was very prone to tribal warfare among the local ethnic groups. However, the situation did not prevent social interaction between the coastal and mountain people (Calo, 2014). Trade and intermarriage took place between them for many centuries, forming alliances which are still upheld today.

Despite the many conflicts, the Alorese people and the surrounding coastal communities are characterized by their friendliness and inclination to establish brotherhood relationships with other ethnic groups (Gomang, 1993:37). This is especially manifested in alliances such as the *Galiyao Watang Lema* alliance and the 10-3-7 alliance. The *Galiyao Watang Lema* alliance involves five kingdoms located around the Pantar Strait. The name *Galiyao* refers to the island of Pantar

(Holton, 2010a; Rodemeier, 1995), while *watang* in Alorese means coastal (Indonesian: *pesisir*, as opposed to *woto* ‘mountain’; Gomang, 1993:49), and *lema* is an Alorese word meaning ‘five’. This century-old alliance was declared among five coastal communities around the straits between the Alor and Pantar islands. It involves, not only the Alorese-speaking communities, but also two AP-speaking communities who live on the coast. The five communities are: Bungabali (Alorese), Blagar (AP), Kui (AP), Pandai (Alorese), and Baranusa (Alorese). The 10-3-7 alliance comprises ten Adang villages, three Alorese villages (Alor Besar, Alor Kecil, and Dulolong), and seven villages from Pura Island (Wellfelt, 2016:232)

Today, the sociocultural life of the Alorese people is strongly shaped by religion. In almost every village, mosques and churches play an important role in running the community. Most of the community gatherings and events are centered on the religious institutions. In some places that still have *rumah adat*, for example Baranusa, Helangdohi, Alor Besar, and Dulolong, the community gatherings are centered on the traditional houses. The gatherings usually take the form of meetings to discuss issues or to plan events in the village. Sometimes, the gatherings only concern religious lectures.

1.5 History

In this section, I describe the history of the Alorese community in three stages. First, I start with pre-colonial history, which includes the period of Islamization (§1.5.1). Secondly, I describe the period of European occupation on the Alor-Pantar islands (§1.5.2). Finally, I discuss post-colonial history, which concerns the era after Indonesian independence (§1.5.3).

1.5.1 Pre-colonial history and Islamization

It has been estimated that the Alorese people first migrated to Pantar around 600 years ago (Anonymous, 1914:77; Klamer, 2011:10, 2012a:72). At that time, there were already people living on the island; the non-Austronesian speakers of AP languages who had settled on the island at least 3,000 years earlier (Holton and Robinson, 2014; O’Connor, 2015; Schapper, 2017).

After the arrival of the Alorese on Alor and Pantar, one of the first contacts they made with the outside world was with Islamic preachers from Maluku, Sulawesi, and Solor. Scholars suggest that Islam arrived on the Alor-Pantar islands at least 500 years ago. Generally, the Islamic preachers converted the local kings, who would be then followed by their people (Harun, 1994). Moreover, trade and migration brought Islam to the Alorese people. The

religion spread from the trading area in the Pantar Strait towards the west (Baranusa and Marisa). A Qur'an manuscript from Maluku dating back to 1518 (Gogo, 1984 in Rodemeier, 2010: 28) and a circumcision knife were brought to Alor around the late sixteenth century (Rodemeier, 2010:28). In addition, a sermon text handwritten by a *Sultan* ('king') from Sulawesi was found in Alor Besar (Gomang, 1993:45–47). Another theory suggests that Islam came to Alor via Solor at around the same time (Aizid, 2016:258). A report from 1642 by a Dominican missionary mentions that the Alor-Pantar islands were inhabited by pagans and Muslims (Hägerdal, 2010a:224). Another piece of evidence regarding the Islamization of Alor and Pantar is a record from 1733 by a Portuguese missionary, Lucas de Santa Catharina, mentioning that Muslims were already widespread in the Alor coastal area at that time (Aritonang and Steenbrink, 2008; Steenbrink, 2003, 2007). In addition, Hägerdal (2010a, 2010b, 2012) states that when the European sailors arrived on Alor, the coastal people did not want to be converted to Catholicism because they had already converted to Islam.

Among the Alorese people, the history of Islamization is manifested in clan names and historic places, such as old cemeteries. In Baranusa, there is a place called Maluku, where the first Islamic preacher, Muktahur Likur, first arrived in the village. His descendants are still living in Baranusa with the family name Likur, under a clan named Maluku. In Alor Besar, there is an old cemetery where Islamic preachers from overseas were buried. Some locals believe that these preachers' graves are sacred.

In the sixteenth century, when the coastal Alorese people were already practicing Islam, the Alor-Pantar people living in the mountains remained untouched by modern religions. They held tightly to their ancestral traditions (Manfroni, 1928). Nonetheless, trading between the coastal people and the mountain people was common practice, although nowhere near as common as it is today. Typically, the coastal people traded their marine products for the agricultural products from the mountain.

1.5.2 Colonial times

The earliest western records concerning the Alor-Pantar islands were from the sixteenth and seventeenth century. A note from 1522 written by Francisco Albo, a helmsman on Magellan's ship 'Victoria' which passed by the islands on 9 January 1522 (Le Roux, 1928) mentions that two islands near Pantar, which were then identified as the Lapang-Batang Islands, were already inhabited (Ataladjar, 2015:19; Pigafetta, 2010b). In addition, a report from 1642 by a Dominican missionary who passed by the area mentions that the people on the islands were pagans (referring to the inland community) and Muslims (referring to the

coastal community). The area was described as uninteresting with little opportunity for trade (Hägerdal, 2012; Manfroni, 1928; Pigafetta, 2010; Sá, 1956:487–488).

By the late seventeenth century, trading activities in the Pantar Strait started to grow, involving people from nearby islands, such as Solor, Flores, and Timor (Dietrich, 1984). The trading involved household goods and weapons that were exchanged for the local copra (dried coconut kernels). Among the people who came from across the sea to the Pantar Strait, the Solorese had the biggest impact. Their presence can be traced back through the clan name Solor in several villages, although these are not the main clans. In addition, a political alliance was formed between the five kingdoms of Alor (*Galiyao Watang Lema*) and the five kingdoms of Solor (*Solor Watang Lema*; Gomang, 1993:30). This indicates that the Pantar Strait was indeed a busy hub.

In the early eighteenth century, the Portuguese missionaries expanded their Catholic influence from Flores to Alor. However, Catholicism did not have a strong influence on the coastal communities in Pantar because they had already converted to Islam. Nevertheless, the Portuguese managed to make treaties with the local kings. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Portuguese had established a base on Alor. They then slowly spread Catholicism among the mountain people of Alor and Pantar (Hägerdal, 2010b).

In the nineteenth century, when the Portuguese had already left Alor, the Dutch began to spread their influence to the island. In 1851, the Dutch army took over Larantuka, located in east Flores, and established a port there (see Figure 1.1). Following that, Dutch influence began to reach Alor. In 1853, the Portuguese gave up their claim to Alor in exchange for Atauro Island (now part of East Timor) which was at that time occupied by the Dutch (Hägerdal, 2010b:17). This exchange was the result of a treaty signed in Lisbon, Portugal on 20 April 1859 (Lardy, 1914). The Dutch then took over Alor, but their influence was limited. Ships from the Dutch East Indies Company (Dutch: VOC) did not travel much to Alor; meanwhile, the nearby Portuguese port on Timor was actively sending boats back and forth to Alor and trading commodities such as iron, wax, rice, and corn (Hägerdal, 2010b:17). Once the news reached the Dutch that this kind of trade was taking place and that the Portuguese were forming suspicious alliances with local villages, the Dutch moved to attack some of the villages on Alor, such as Kui (Hägerdal, 2010b:23). In 1861, the Dutch established a *posthouder* ‘post holder’ in Alor Kecil at the entrance of Kabola Bay to strengthen their presence on Alor.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Chinese merchants from Kupang began to expand their trading activities in the area of the Pantar Strait (Du Bois,

1960:16). They traded copra as well as marine products, woven cloth, agricultural products, and even slaves. In addition, the Chinese formed a good relationship with the locals. Later, during the Japanese occupation in World War II, the people from the mountains offered shelters to the Chinese people. These Chinese traders from Kupang also brought the Kupang Malay language to Alor. Subsequently, the Malay language began to spread, and possibly replaced Alorese as the language of interethnic communication (Klamer, 2014b).

Dutch modern bureaucracy did not reach Alor until the beginning of the twentieth century when the Dutch arrived in Alor Kecil again in 1908. Several local rulers in the coastal communities, including the Alorese, were designated as kings by the Dutch government. These local rulers included the *raja* 'king' of Bungabali (Alorese), Blagar (Papuan), and Kui (Papuan). They were even given control over the inland mountain community. However, these rulers could not exercise power over the mountain population, since the communities had been living in opposition for a long time. Social control was only exercised within kin and village groups, while relations with other groups remained hostile (Du Bois, 1960:16; Nicolspeyer, 1940:8).

1.5.3 History after Indonesian independence

When Indonesia proclaimed independence on 17 August 1945, the news reached Alor not long after the declaration. Administratively, Alor first belonged to the Lesser Sunda Province (Indonesian: *Sunda Kecil*), which in 1958 was split into three (Bali, West Nusa Tenggara, and East Nusa Tenggara; Burhanudin & Lestariningsih, 2015:332–337; Lauder et al. 2000:5). In the period following independence, the Alorese began to expand their settlements across the Alor-Pantar coastal lines. Several new villages were formed in the 1960s, such as Beang Onong, established in 1960, and Bana, established in 1966.

In the early days of Indonesian independence, political instability led to conflicts in several regions, including Alor. In 1965, there were killings in Kalabahi, where hundreds or possibly thousands of inhabitants of inland Alor were rounded up and executed by the Indonesian army because they were alleged to belong to communist groups (Klamer, 2012a, 2014b:17).

From the early 1960s, the national language Indonesian, which is based on a variety of Malay, was used in public schools. Pupils who attended public schools learned Indonesian as one of their first languages. Since the use of the local variety of Alor Malay (derived from Kupang Malay) was already common, the Indonesian language (Indonesian: *Bahasa Indonesia*), which was also derived from a Malay variety, was taken up easily by the Alorese (Baird et al. n.d.; Saad, 2020:74, 78).

1.6 Summary

In this chapter, research questions and aims of this dissertation have been presented. These encompass four main topics; namely, oral history, grammatical description, historical phonology, and loanwords. Furthermore, this chapter has provided an introduction to the Alorese geography, community, and history. The Alorese people live in areas that are generally very dry with limited access to fresh water. Means of transportation to the Alorese villages mainly comprises fishing boats and roads that are in poor condition. The Alorese people are mostly fishermen, with some cultivating crops, weaving cloth, or harvesting seaweed. Alorese villages are predominantly Muslim, except for one village in northeast Pantar (Helangdohi) where the majority of inhabitants are Christian. The Alorese social structure is based on a clan system, in which each clan fulfills a specific role in the community. The recorded history of the Alorese dates back to the year 1518 when Islam spread in the coastal communities of Alor and Pantar. Other historical records come from European sailors who passed by the area in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the next chapter, the methodology used in this study is presented.