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

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CHAPTER 2

Methodology

2.1 Overview

The following sections present the methodology used to collect and analyze the data for this study. This dissertation combines two types of data: oral history and linguistic data. Below, I describe the processes I implemented in data collection (§2.2) and data analysis (§2.3).

2.2 Data collection

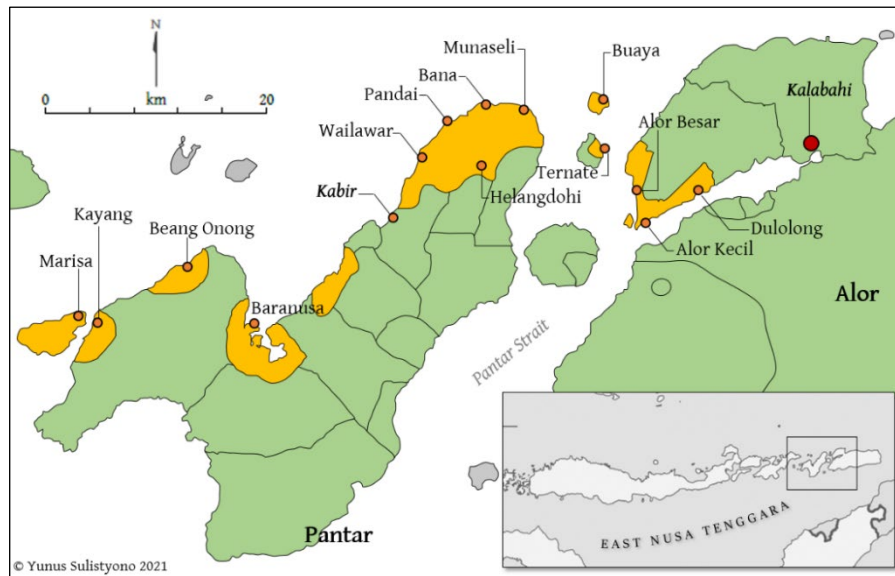
2.2.1 Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted during two trips: one in 2018 and one in 2020. The goal of the first trip was to collect wordlists and oral history data (§2.2.1.1), while the second trip was aimed at collecting data for a grammar sketch (§2.2.1.2).

2.2.1.1 Fieldwork for collection of wordlists and oral history data

In April–July 2018, I carried out survey fieldwork to collect wordlists and oral history data. The data from this fieldwork form the basis of the discussions of migration stories in Chapter 3, historical phonology in Chapter 5, and loanwords in Chapter 6. I visited fourteen Alorese villages: Marisa, Kayang, Beang Onong, Baranusa, Wailawar, Pandai, Bana, Munaseli, Helangdohi, Ternate, Buaya, Alor Besar, Alor Kecil, and Dulolong (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Locations of the Alorese villages



During this fieldwork trip, I traveled twice to Alor from my hometown in Java. My first visit was to the villages located on Pantar and my second visit was to the villages located on Alor and on the small islands in the Pantar Strait. During the first visit, I used the village of Bana as the base for my activities. From there, I went to Wailawar, Pandai, Helangdohi, and Munaseli, spending three to nine days in each village. I then went to Baranusa to collect data from the western part of Pantar Island. I first visited the villages of Kayang and Marisa, following which I collected data from Beang Onong and Baranusa. During my second visit to Alor, I used the village of Alor Besar as a base from which to make trips to the villages of Alor Kecil and Dulolong, as well as two island villages on Ternate and Buaya.

During this trip, I made recordings of oral history, wordlist, and speech using stimuli. Out of the fourteen villages I visited, I collected oral history from all of the fourteen villages, wordlists from ten of the villages, and speech using stimuli from six of the villages (cf. 2.2.1.3; Table 2.1). The interviews for oral history were carried out with the local traditional leaders (Indonesian: *ketua adat*) using a cultural questionnaire (Appendix A). The oral history recordings are in Indonesian. The wordlist recordings were made with consultants who met the following criteria: (a) a self-described native speaker of Alorese, (b) adult over the age of twenty-five, (c) no obvious speech impediments, (d) had spent their childhood in the same village as they were now living in, and (e) had not

traveled or lived outside of the village for any period longer than one year. In each village, I carried out interviews using a set of wordlists (Kaiping et al. 2019), with at least two consultants and made recordings with one of them. In addition, I made recordings of natural speech during this trip.⁴ The speech was generated using stimuli namely, the Frog story (Meyer, 1969) and the Surrey stimuli (Fedden et al. 2010).

2.2.1.2 Fieldwork to collect data for sketch grammar

In February–August 2020, I carried out another fieldwork to collect data for the Alorese sketch grammar in Chapter 4. This fieldwork took place in three villages: Pandai, Wailawar, and Kabir. These villages were chosen because the surveys from the previous fieldwork trip had revealed that the varieties spoken in these villages were relatively linguistically conservative, thus making them good candidates to explore the grammatical system of Alorese.

For this part of the fieldwork, I made two visits to Pantar. The first visit was in March–April 2020. This first visit was originally planned to last at least two months, until May 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 restrictions imposed by local officials, I was not able to work fully in the field. Therefore, I continued working from home on Java while maintaining contact with my consultants via phone and text messaging. My second visit to Pantar took place in June–July 2020. During this visit, I worked in the field for three weeks before my scheduled return to the Netherlands.

During this part of the fieldwork, I collected thirty-two recordings of Alorese speech in the form of conversations and monologues, with a total combined length of 2 hours and 14 minutes. The individual recordings are of various lengths, from 1 minute to 13 minutes (cf. §4.1).

2.2.1.3 Data archiving

The data from the two fieldwork trips are archived and publicly accessible at <https://dataverse.nl/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.34894/APQDTX>. The collection of oral history interviews, wordlists, and recordings of natural speech (collected on the first trip in 2018) are stored in folders organized as shown in Table 2.1 below.

⁴ The term ‘natural speech’ in this dissertation refers to any narratives, elicited materials, and spontaneous conversations collected during fieldwork. Note that the naturalness of this type of data depends on the speakers, and not necessarily on the tools or stimuli (Klamer and Moro, 2020).

Table 2.1: Names of folders from the 2018 survey fieldwork data collection

Folder name	Village	Contents
Spoken Data_01_aolys_dul_srvy	Dulolong	oral history, wordlist
Spoken Data_02_aolys_alk_srvy	Alor Kecil	oral history, wordlist
Spoken Data_03_aolys_alb_srvy	Alor Besar	oral history
Spoken Data_04_aolys_bya_srvy	Buaya	oral history, wordlist, speech
Spoken Data_05_aolys_ter_srvy	Ternate	oral history, wordlist, speech
Spoken Data_06_aolys_mun_srvy	Munaseli	oral history
Spoken Data_07_aolys_ban_srvy	Bana Onong	oral history, wordlist
Spoken Data_08_aolys_hel_srvy	Helangdohi	oral history, wordlist
Spoken Data_09_aolys_pan_srvy	Pandai	oral history
Spoken Data_10_aolys_war_srvy	Wailawar	oral history, wordlist, speech
Spoken Data_11_aolys_bar_srvy	Baranusa	oral history, wordlist, speech
Spoken Data_12_aolys_beo_srvy	Beang Onong	oral history, wordlist, speech
Spoken Data_13_aolys_kya_srvy	Kayang	oral history, wordlist, speech
Spoken Data_14_aolys_mrs_srvy	Marisa	oral history

All fourteen folders contain oral history interviews and some have recordings of wordlist and natural speech data. The abbreviation *aolys* represents the Alorese Glottolog code (*aol*) and my initials *ys*. The following abbreviations in the folder name stand for the names of the villages where I collected the data (see also list of abbreviations on page xv). The details of the oral history recordings can be found in the introduction to Chapter 3 (cf. §3.1), while the details of the wordlist can be found in the introduction to Chapter 5 (cf. §5.1). From this 2018 survey fieldwork, I also collected written data of stories about village history preserved by the local leaders in the form of scanned PDF files (cf. §3.3.1; Table 3.3).

During my fieldwork in 2020, I focused on one dialect spoken in three villages: Pandai (*pan*), Wailawar (*war*), and Kabir (*kbr*). Kabir is an additional location where Alorese speakers of the same dialect as Pandai and Wailawar can be found. All three villages are located close to each other (see Figure 2.1). The list in Table 2.2 below shows the names of the folders in which the recordings of natural speech are stored, together with their transcriptions.

Table 2.2: Names of folders from the 2020 fieldwork data collection

Folder name	Village	Contents
Spoken Data_15_aolys_pan_st_rkb	Pandai	Monologue (stories)
Spoken Data_16_aolys_pan_st_ska	Pandai	Monologue (stories)
Spoken Data_17_aolys_pan_cv_mms	Pandai	Conversations
Spoken Data_18_aolys_pan_cv_hp	Pandai	Conversations
Spoken Data_19_aolys_war_st_dja	Wailawar	Monologue (stories)
Spoken Data_20_aolys_kbr_st_hmd	Kabir	Monologue (stories)
Spoken Data_21_aolys_kbr_st_ltf	Kabir	Monologue (stories)

This collection consists of two conversations (abbreviated to *cv*) as well as monologues (abbreviated to *st*) from five individual speakers whose names are abbreviated in the folder names. Details of these recordings can be found in the introduction to Chapter 4 (cf. §4.1.2).

2.2.2 Data collection through open data archives

I also made use of openly accessible archival materials of Alorese in order to enrich my data collection; namely, Alorese linguistic data in the form of video recordings collected by Moro (2016b). This collection comprises MP4 recordings and their transcriptions (cf. §4.1.2). In addition, I make use of lexical data (~600 words per language) of Flores-Lembata and Timor-Alor-Pantar languages from the LexiRumah linguistic database (Kaiping et al. 2019).

I incorporated recordings from Moro (2016b) together with their transcriptions into my corpus data. This additional data was particularly useful for composing the sketch grammar (cf. Chapter 4). I selected recordings that were made at the same locations as my 2020 fieldwork sites. Therefore, they are from the same dialect as the one I focused on during my 2020 fieldwork. In addition, I make use of wordlist of Alorese collected by Moro (2016a; via Kaiping et al. 2019) from the villages Alor Besar, Munaseli, and Pandai for the study in Chapters 5 and 6.

From the LexiRumah database (<https://lexirumah.model-ling.eu/>; Kaiping et al. 2019), I collected wordlists pertaining to two language families: the Flores-Lembata (Austronesian) and Timor-Alor-Pantar (non-Austronesian) languages. These wordlists include both phonemic transcriptions and transcriptions in practical orthography. They were collected by various linguists and comprise varying numbers of lexemes. Details of these wordlist are provided in the introductions to Chapter 5 (§5.3.1) and Chapter 6 (§6.4.1). The Flores-Lembata

wordlists were used in particular for the study of Alorese historical phonology presented in Chapter 5. The data enable the reconstruction of the ancestral language of Alorese, together with its sister language, Lamaholot, within the language family of Flores-Lembata. Moreover, the Timor-Alor-Pantar wordlists were studied to identify loanwords between Alorese and the neighboring non-Austronesian languages (see Chapter 6).

2.3 Data analysis

In this section, I describe how I analyzed and interpreted the data. Based on the research questions of this dissertation (§1.2), there are two relevant methodological domains to consider: oral history and historical-comparative linguistics. This dissertation combines both approaches, which complement each other in the pursuit of providing a complete picture of Alorese history.

No previous studies of Alorese history have yet attempted to combine oral history and historical linguistics.

A combination of oral history and historical linguistics is informative when studying dialects because it can provide insight into whether the dialect variation can be explained by the social history of the speakers. By linking both disciplines, I was, for example, able to confirm that dialects which are considered linguistically conservative are spoken in the oldest Alorese settlements. The combination of these two approaches also has potential to yield more insight into the social history of the Alorese people.

2.3.1 Oral history

There are various possible approaches to oral history. For example, some researchers describe unique phenomena in storytelling, while others focus on the way stories are told or the sociocultural background of the storytellers. For this study, I focus on migration stories told by the traditional leaders of the Alorese community. Such stories are part of indigenous history, which refers to history as situated knowledge with specific understandings about how the past is preserved, constituted, and represented in the memory of the present-day community (Wellfelt, 2016:17).

The oral traditions of the Alorese people, in which their migration histories are retold, can be regarded as legends. According to Danandjaja (1984:66–83), legends, specifically in Indonesia, are prose stories that are strongly believed by the storytellers to be factual; in other words, that they convey events that genuinely occurred in the past. However, legends are often seen by historians as collective folk history, with the potential to be distorted

and to diverge greatly from the actual events of the past.

In line with this, it is important to consider whether oral history can be considered reliable as a source to reconstruct the past of the Alorese people. Due to the fluidity of oral narrative topology, narrative history does not fit well with scientific research, unless there is archaeological evidence and/or archival material enabling further analysis. Nevertheless, storytelling can sometimes be the only available instrument to discover the history of a group of people, meaning that it is valuable even in the absence of supporting evidence (Van Engelenhoven & Nazarudin, 2016:227). Ritchie (2003:110) and Vansina (1985:199) argue that oral history has an important part to play in the reconstruction of the past and that it should be considered equally as important as any other form of historical evidence. By examining the themes of stories in various accounts of Alorese oral history, it is possible to generate ideas and hypotheses about the history of the Alorese people.

The oral history approach used in this study is comparable to the *historyscapes* on Alor proposed by Wellfelt (2016). This approach employs close reading of transcribed texts from interviews, followed by analyzing and organizing the texts to form a timeline. In addition, this process can be supplemented with archive materials, such as written texts. The resulting chronologies point to important issues, events, and developments. The ethnographic study by Wellfelt (2016) describes how the peoples on Alor distinguish and represent their own histories. It is a study of the collective memory of the indigenous people on Alor using situated history to relate to the past. The study highlights key stories and treats them as being equally as important as academic sources. A similar approach to Alorese oral history is found in Rodemeier (2006), a qualitative ethnological study of oral narratives among the Alorese people on Pantar which aims to shed light on how the Alorese community represent their narratives and myths.

I adopt this approach for my study as it yields insight into the history of a group of people who have no strong written tradition. It can help provide information regarding where the Alorese people came from and where they moved to. In Chapter 3, I relate the Alorese migration story, based on the interviews I conducted with my consultants to gain knowledge about the migration of their ancestors.

2.3.2 Historical-comparative linguistics

Historical-comparative linguistics reveals and examines ways in which languages can change. The methodology involved draws on lexical data across various languages to gain an understanding of the changes that a language has

undergone, and can provide insight into the linguistic history of a certain group of people. In this discipline, synchronic data is used as a basis to reconstruct an ancestor language of several dialects or languages (Campbell, 1999:2).

Historical-comparative linguistic methods have been applied to Alorese by several linguists. Stokhof (1975) is a study of the lexicon of Alor-Pantar languages. This study indicates that Alorese is strongly related to Lamaholot, a neighboring Austronesian language, just west of the Alorese speaking area. Alorese is deemed a distinct language by Klamer (2011), due to obvious historic changes in the language which manifest in a low percentage of cognates with Lamaholot and the loss of morphology in Alorese (Klamer, 2012a, 2012b, 2020). Robinson (2015) studied the traces of lexical borrowing between Alorese and the AP languages, while Moro (2018) investigated a contact scenario between the Alorese and the AP speakers resulting in the use of a plural word, which is not a native Alorese feature. Fricke (2019) studied the contact history of languages in the Flores-Lembata area, including Alorese as part of the Flores-Lembata language family. Lastly, the study by Moro and Fricke (2020) is a structural comparison of *give*-constructions in Alorese, Lamaholot (Austronesian), and Adang (Timor-Alor-Pantar), which shows that the Alorese *give*-construction is a result of contact between the Alorese and the AP speakers.

Following the line of research in previous work, this dissertation uses historical-comparative linguistics as a tool to investigate the history of the Alorese language and its speakers by comparing Alorese with its sister language, Lamaholot, within the language family of Flores-Lembata. Alorese is considered to be closely related to Western Lamaholot (abbreviated as WL; Elias, 2017; Fricke, 2019), therefore I compare my Alorese data with the WL varieties, with the aim of examining the historical relationship between these varieties and reconstructing a set of Alorese proto-forms. In addition, historical linguistic analysis is useful as a tool to investigate the contact history between Alorese and the neighboring AP languages, especially through lexical borrowing. In my study of loanwords, I use the historical linguistic approach to support arguments regarding the status of loanwords in Alorese and to identify Alorese words that might be the sources of loanwords in several AP languages.

2.4 Summary

This chapter has described the methods employed in collecting and analyzing the data in this dissertation. It has also discussed the combination of historical linguistic and oral history approaches applied in the following chapters. In the study of the language and culture of the Alorese, there has not yet been any attempt to combine both these approaches in reconstructing the history of the

language. The data for this reconstruction include oral history interviews collected through fieldwork in fourteen Alorese villages across the Alor-Pantar islands. The linguistic data comprise data collected through fieldwork, as well as openly accessible archived materials. Two fieldwork trips were carried out in 2018 and 2020 to collect wordlists, oral history interviews, and natural speech. All data collected during the two fieldwork trips are available in openly accessible archives.

