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Leiden
The Netherlands

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

Sulistyono, Y.

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Discussion and conclusions

7.1 Revisiting the research questions

The overall aim of this dissertation is to reconstruct the history of Alorese by combining oral history and linguistic history. There are nine questions posed in the beginning of this dissertation (cf. §1.2). The first three questions deal with Alorese oral history and how it can be used to build a chronology of the migration of the ancestors of the Alorese people. The following two questions concern Alorese historical phonology and specifically how the Proto-Flores-Lembata (PFL) sounds are reflected in the Western Lamaholot (WL) languages, which include Alorese. In addition, the discussion of historical phonology also addresses evidence for Alorese as an innovation-defined subgroup within WL. The last four questions address traces of contact between Alorese and the Alor-Pantar languages in terms of their lexicons. There are three main topics in this discussion: loanwords in Alorese from various sources, including the Alor-Pantar (AP) languages; the role of Alorese as donor language to the AP languages; and finally what the distribution of loanwords in the Alorese varieties and its neighboring AP languages indicates about contact history.

7.2 Summary of results

The general introduction presented in Chapter 1 situated Alorese in its geographic and historical context. The geography of Alorese covers coastal

Alor-Pantar areas which are mostly dry and fresh water are generally scarce. There are only two fertile areas, namely the hilltop area of northeast Pantar where the village Helangdohi is located, and the area of the Alor Peninsula where the villages of Alor Besar, Alor Kecil, and Dulolong are located. Historical records of Alorese date back to the early sixteenth century when the Alor-Pantar islands is mentioned in records from European sailors.

Chapter 2 is a description of the methodology, which includes a presentation of the techniques I used in data collection and analysis. The data used in this dissertation were collected through fieldwork and from openly accessible data archives. In analyzing the data, I combined the approaches of oral history and historical-comparative linguistics to reconstruct the history of Alorese.

According to Alorese oral history, discussed in Chapter 3, there are six key events in the chronology that shaped the migration patterns of the Alorese people. First, a flood on Rusa Island caused people to flee from Rusa to Pantar and the Alor Peninsula. This event marks the earliest movement of the ancestors of the Alorese people. The second key event was the arrival of people from outside the Alor-Pantar islands. This event is believed by the locals to have taken place in the fourteenth century, marking the beginning of sociopolitical development in the Alorese community, in which kingdoms began to be established. According to legend, one of the oldest Alorese kingdoms, called Pandai, was founded by migrants said to be from 'Java'. The third important event was a war between two Alorese kingdoms, called Pandai and Munaseli. The fourth event was the expansion of the Alorese people from Pandai to Baranusa in west Pantar and to Alor Besar on the Alor Peninsula. The fifth event of importance was the flood on the Lapang-Batang Islands. Lastly, the sixth key event was the expansion of the Alorese people to the islands of Ternate and Buaya.

There is a common narrative among the Alorese communities with regard to the migration stories, which forms part of the history of the clans. That is, every clan in each village has a historical narrative about the origin of their ancestors, and this ancestral background always aligns with the general consensus regarding the migration stories. For example, in the village of Pandai, there is the *Being* clan who are originally from the mountain. The ancestors of this clan are believed to have been the descendants of the survivors of the flood on Rusa Island. Another example is the *Uma Kakang* clan who are believed to be the descendants of the 'Javanese' people from Pandai.

The grammatical description of Alorese provided in Chapter 4 is based on the Pantar dialect, as spoken in the villages of Pandai, Wailawar, and Kabir; this

dialect was chosen as it is the most conservative. This description provides an in-depth introduction to the Alorese language in terms of its grammatical structure. The chapter includes a description of Alorese phonology, noun phrases, possessive constructions, verbs, and clauses, as well as sentence types and clause combinations.

Chapter 5 is a study of Alorese historical phonology, with the aim of reconstructing the sounds of Proto-Alorese (PAL) and Proto-Western-Lamaholot (PWL). The regular reflexes of PFL sounds in Alorese are also investigated. The resulting sound inventories of PAL and PWL show that the only difference between the inventories of the two proto languages is that PAL did not have the approximant [j]. This sound has become affricate [dʒ] in PAL, as in PAL *kadʒo < PWL *kayo ‘tree’ and PAL *ladʒa < PWL *layaʔ ‘sail’. Alorese is an innovation-defined subgroup within WL due to an exclusively shared sound change of PWL *t > PAL *ʔ in word-final position. In addition, a lower-level subgroup within Alorese can be defined, which I call Straits Alorese. The varieties in this subgroup are Ternate, Buaya, Alor Besar, Alor Kecil, and Dulolong, which are spoken in the Pantar Strait area. This subgroup is based on the exclusively shared sound change of PAL *w > f in all positions, PAL *ai > ei in word-final position, and the addition of the syllables -uŋ, -iŋ and -aŋ in final position in some words.

Chapter 6 is devoted to the study of lexical borrowing in Alorese and the neighboring Alor-Pantar (AP) languages. The issue of lexical borrowing is studied from two perspectives: (1) lexical borrowing in Alorese from different sources, including AP languages, Malay, Portuguese, and Dutch; and (2) lexical borrowing in the AP languages from Alorese, which excludes earlier Austronesian borrowing in AP languages that do not involve Alorese.

AP loanwords in Alorese can be grouped based on the geographical spread of the loanwords. There are six groups of loanwords that indicate stages of contact with the AP donor languages (§6.5.1). The first group concerns AP loanwords that can be reconstructed to PAL, and comprises seven loanwords in the semantic domains of body parts (‘heart’), quantity (‘ten’), kinship terms (‘younger sibling’), emotions (‘angry’), agriculture (‘taro’), motion (‘to close’), and sense perception (‘dirty’). The main donor languages in this group are languages that have access to the Pantar Strait, namely Blagar, Adang, Klon, Kui, and Kaera. As these loanwords are attested in all Alorese varieties as regularly inherited forms and can be reconstructed to PAL, this group of loans indicates a very early stage of contact. The second group concerns two AP loanwords that are attested only in the varieties spoken on Pantar, namely the words for ‘road’ and ‘to wash’. Kaera and Western Pantar the most likely donor language for

these words. The third group contains AP loanwords only attested in the varieties spoken in northeast Pantar. This group comprises eight AP loanwords, including nouns from the semantic domains of agriculture ('rattan', 'garden', 'digging stick'), hunting ('fish trap'), and the physical world ('coral rock'), and several verbs ('to fold', 'to pull', 'to pray'). The donor languages for this group of words are most likely Blagar, Reta, and Teiwa. The fourth group covers three AP loanwords attested only in varieties spoken in northeast Pantar and on the Alor Peninsula. These are words belonging to the semantic domains of the household ('bed; raised platform') and law ('adultery'). The fifth group concerns only the Straits varieties, and covers five AP loanwords, including nouns belonging to the semantic domains of animals ('monitor lizard'), spatial relations ('small'), motion ('to bury'), time ('finished'), and the physical world ('mud'). Adang, Blagar, and Reta are likely the donor languages for this group. The sixth loanword category concerns the Alor Peninsula varieties and contains only one AP loan, namely the word for 'root', likely borrowed from Adang, Kabola, or Hamap.

In addition to the AP loans, Alorese has also borrowed from Malay, Portuguese, and Dutch (§6.5.2; §6.5.3; §6.5.4). In the Malay loanwords, the voiceless palatal *c* [tʃ] always becomes *s* in Alorese, as in *sangkir* (< Malay *cangkir*) 'cup' and *basas* (< *baca*) 'to read'. In my Alorese corpus, there are six Portuguese loanwords, corresponding to the concepts 'hour', 'window', 'closet', 'machete', 'tobacco', and 'chair'. Furthermore, there are five Dutch loanwords attested in Alorese, corresponding to the concepts 'give'/'take over', 'raised platform', 'count', 'biscuit', and 'free; detached'.

Alorese has also acted as donor language to the neighboring AP languages. Twenty-six loanwords from Alorese are attested in AP languages (§6.6). The AP languages with the highest number of Alorese loanwords are Blagar, Reta, and Teiwa. These loanwords belong to the semantic domains of animals ('crocodile', 'whale', 'tinea', 'flea', 'frog', 'butterfly'), basic actions and technology ('to wipe', 'rope', 'to fold', 'burden stick'), religion and belief ('mosque', 'traditional house'), the body ('breast', 'deaf'), speech and language ('to say', 'name'), agriculture ('field', 'branch'), motion ('to blow', 'to push'), the physical world ('mud'), spatial relations ('narrow', 'tall'), emotions and values ('shy'), cognition ('to think'), and kinship ('child').

The distribution of loanwords in both directions of borrowing indicates that contact among Alorese speakers and speakers of AP languages must have taken place in the Pantar Strait area. Moreover, the distribution of Alorese loanwords in the AP languages also indicates that the strait area is a zone of intensive contact, with Blagar as the most important donor language to Alorese.

The presence of Alorese loanwords in the other AP languages, particularly Reta and Teiwa, also points to contact between Alorese and the AP languages around the area of northeast Pantar and the Pantar Strait.

7.3 General discussion

In what follows, I aim to relate the results of this study to the previous work on Alorese, before concluding with directions for future research in Section 7.4.

The historical chronology based on Alorese oral history dates the arrival of the Alorese speakers on the Alor-Pantar islands to the fourteenth century, and reports key events that represent waves of migration of the Alorese people. The suggestion that the earliest settlement of the Alorese people took place in the fourteenth century in the area of northeast Pantar (cf. §3.6) confirms the linguistic hypothesis suggesting that Alorese split from Lamaholot around 600 years ago (Klamer, 2011). The migrants from the western islands, depicted in oral history as the people from ‘Java’ and ‘Malaka’, established sociopolitical centers in the forms of kingdoms and markets in the northeast Pantar area. These kingdoms, referred to today as the Pandai and Munaseli Kingdoms, are also reported by Gomang (1993:84), Lemoine (1969:7), Rodemeier (2006:175, 301–305), and Wellfelt (2016:275). Further information from oral history states that from the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Alorese population in northeast Pantar expanded their territory to the coastal Alor Peninsula (which became the Bungabali Kingdom), west Pantar (which became the Baranusa Kingdom), and the Lapang-Batang Islands. After that, they slowly spread to the surrounding coastal areas of Alor-Pantar, and the small islands.

Based on the findings from oral history, which considers the northeast Pantar area to be the site of the earliest settlement of the Alorese people, it was decided that the grammatical description of Alorese would be based on the varieties spoken in this area, particularly in and around the village of Pandai. This choice was motivated by the consideration that conservative varieties could possibly show remnants of linguistic features that were lost in the other Alorese varieties.

It has been suggested in the work of Klamer (2011, 2012a, 2020) and Moro (2019) that Alorese lost its productive morphological processes due to contact with the Alor-Pantar languages. These studies are mainly based on the Alorese varieties spoken on the Alor Peninsula, particularly in the villages of Alor Besar and Alor Kecil, which were settled later than Pandai. The Alorese sketch grammar presented in Chapter 4 reveals that even in the most conservative dialect, i.e. that spoken in northeast Pantar, Alorese hardly has any derivational morphology; only reduplication, and final suffixes which suggest remnants of

an alienability distinction. Therefore, indeed, compared to the other WL languages (such as the Lewoingu variety; Nishiyama & Kelen, 2007), Alorese is substantially simplified (Klamer, 2020; cf. §4.4 and §4.5 of this dissertation).

The description of the phonology of Alorese further reveals how it differs from Lamaholot, particularly when the phonology of both Alorese and Lamaholot are investigated diachronically. According to Fricke (2019:224), Alorese is part of the WL subgroup in the Flores-Lembata family, due the shared sound change of PFL *r > ʔ in the WL languages. In the study of Alorese historical phonology presented in Chapter 5, where the sounds of Proto-Alorese (PAL) and Proto-Western-Lamaholot (PWL) are reconstructed, it is revealed that PAL has an exclusive sound change of PWL *t > *ʔ in word-final position, thus, providing evidence for Alorese as a distinct branch within the WL subgroup. Other evidence supporting this grouping includes the grammatical innovation of a plural word *hire* 'PL' in Alorese (Moro, 2018), lexical replacements such as *bema* 'to wash' and *kuing* 'dark', and the existence of metathesis in some words, such as Lamaholot *kerome* ~ Alorese *kemore* 'rat', Lamaholot *gike* ~ Alorese *gaki* 'to bite', and Lamaholot *rema* ~ Alorese *mareng* 'night'. In addition, the study of Alorese historical phonology confirms that there is a tendency in the linguistically conservative area of northeast Pantar to retain final consonants in some Alorese words, such as PMP and PFL final *-k which is retained unchanged (as in *tahak* 'ripe' < PFL *m-tasak 'ripe' < PMP *ma-tasak 'ripe'), PMP and PFL final *-t which is retained as a glottal stop (as in *lapeʔ* 'fold' < PFL *ləpət 'fold' < PMP *ləpət 'fold'), PMP final *-R/*-l and PFL *-r which is retained as ʔ (as in *gateʔ* 'itchy' < PFL *gatər 'itchy' < PMP *gatəl 'itchy'), and PMP and PFL final *-l which is retained unchanged (as in *kawil* 'fishing hook' < PFL *kavil 'fishing hook' < PMP *kawil 'fishing hook'; cf. §5.9).

The Alorese lexicon also shows traces of contact with the AP languages, particularly through borrowing, as already suggested in previous work by Klamer (2011) and Robinson (2015). Furthermore, the investigation of loanwords presented in Chapter 6 reveals several layers of contact, visible in the context of geographic subgroups of Alorese varieties. The more widespread the AP loanwords, the earlier the borrowing took place; the narrower the spread of the AP loanwords, the more recently the borrowing took place (cf. §6.8).

The distribution of AP loanwords among the Alorese varieties also reveals a conservative area of Alorese where early contact took place. Based on the geographic grouping of the Alorese varieties (cf. §6.4.5), the varieties spoken in northeast Pantar have eight exclusively shared AP loanwords; this contrasts with the other geographic subgroups, such as the Alor Peninsula group which has just one exclusively shared AP loanword; the overall Pantar group which

has only two exclusively shared AP loanwords, and the combination of the Northeast Pantar and the Straits groups, in which there are only three exclusively shared AP loanwords (cf. §6.5.1.7).

The distribution of the Alorese loanwords in the AP languages also suggests that the contact between Alorese and AP languages took place in the vicinity of the Alorese varieties spoken in northeast Pantar. There are fourteen Alorese loanwords attested in more than one AP language; these AP languages include Adang, Blagar, Reta, Kaera, Teiwa, Kamang, Klon, Sar, Klamu, and Western Pantar. In addition, there are eight Alorese loanwords exclusively attested in Blagar, two Alorese loanwords exclusively attested in Reta, and two Alorese loanwords exclusively attested in Teiwa (cf. §6.6).

In conclusion, based on this combined investigation of oral history and linguistic history, there is clear evidence that the earliest Alorese settlement was in the northeast Pantar area. Through the study of linguistic history, we have seen that there is a tendency in the northeast Pantar varieties to retain final consonants of proto-forms (*-k, *-t, *-r, and *-l) and to have the largest number of exclusively shared AP loanwords. In addition, most AP languages that are recipients of Alorese loanwords are located in proximity to the Alorese varieties of northeast Pantar.

7.4 Directions for further research

At a general level, this dissertation has shown that the combination of data from oral history and comparative-historical linguistics allows for a better understanding of the history of a language such as Alorese. We have seen that both disciplines are of great relevance in reconstructing the history of a community; this is particularly pertinent for the indigenous people of east Indonesia, who typically have few historical records. This dissertation has provided answers to the research questions posed in Section 1.2; however, at the same time, a number of other questions have been raised. These questions include the following: (1) Apart from migration stories, which other cultural features can be examined to support the link between oral history and historical linguistics? (2) Are there other branches within the WL subgroup besides Alorese? (3) Which branches of WL are the closest relatives to Alorese? (4) When was the time of the densest contact between speakers of Alorese and AP languages?

In Chapter 3, I discuss migration stories that emerged in all the interviews I conducted. However, this does not rule out that there are other cultural features that could be used as indexes for reconstructing the history of Alorese. These could include traditional house shapes, woven cloth motifs, or various

types of traditional rituals, such as dances or mantras. By considering these additional aspects, further shared historic narratives may be found among the various Alorese groups.

To investigate the internal division of the WL subgroup beyond Alorese was not within the scope of this dissertation. However, I would like to stress that this particular topic is nevertheless important in revealing the history of the Lamaholot community as a whole. The lexical data from WL varieties provided by Keraf (1978), easily accessible through the LexiRumah database (Kaiping et al. 2019), were very useful in the present study. However, in order to ascertain whether there are other branches within the WL group, besides Alorese, further data collection especially of spoken language data, preferably in combination with oral history data is desirable. Moreover, these additional data on other WL varieties and their oral histories would potentially point to the closest relatives of Alorese in the WL group.

Finally, the contact scenarios proposed in Chapter 6 suggest that there were multiple stages of contact that resulted in the emergence of loanwords in the varieties of Alorese. However, more research into the Alorese lexicon and its semantics is required to determine which stage of contact influenced Alorese the most: borrowing at the level of PAL, or borrowing that took place at later stages.