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

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Summaries

English summary

The overall goal of this dissertation is to reconstruct the history of Alorese through a combined study of its linguistic and oral history. The data for this reconstruction were gathered through fieldwork, specifically in the form of oral history interviews, wordlists, and samples of natural speech. In addition, materials are also drawn from existing linguistic databases and archived recordings of natural speech, which serve to enrich the data set. From a synchronic perspective, Alorese lacks both inflectional and derivational morphology; in addition the grammatical relations of subject and object are expressed by constituent order. Diachronically, the language is an innovation-defined sub-group within the Western Lamaholot cluster in the Flores-Lembata family. Contact between the Alorese people and the speakers of Alor-Pantar (Papuan) languages has resulted in lexical borrowing, which can be observed in the lexicons of these languages. Moreover, oral history accounts confirm that there were socio-politically dominant Alorese communities in the 14th century, which implies that the spread of the Alorese people in the Alor-Pantar islands began around this time.

The study of Alorese oral history in Chapter 3 yields a chronology of the arrival of the Alorese ancestors. The chronology is built based on migration stories and the history of the Alorese clans. The migration chronology is characterized by the following events. The first event is a flood on Rusa Island in the 13th century which caused the island's inhabitants to flee to northeast Pantar and Alor Kecil. The next event is the arrival of people from islands west of Pantar, which marks the beginning of socio-political developments in which local kingdoms began to form. The third event is the expansion of the Alorese people from Pandai to the east (Alor Besar) and west (Baranusa). It is then followed by recent movements, such as the expansion to Marisa, Dulolong, and the islands of Ternate, Buaya, and Kangge. In addition, the clan histories also show connections between the arrival of each clan's ancestors and the events that mark their arrival.

The grammar sketch in Chapter 4 reports several grammatical features of Alorese. Alorese generally has penultimate syllable stress and the NP construction is head-initial. Verbs in Alorese can encode their subject as a free

pronoun or as a pronominal prefix combined with an optional additional pronoun. The only active morphological process in Alorese is reduplication, while grammatical relations of subject and object are expressed by constituent order. Moreover, tense is not marked, while aspect and mood are expressed by adverbs.

Chapter 5 is a discussion of Alorese historical phonology including the reconstruction of Proto-Alorese (PAL) and Proto-Western-Lamaholot (PWL) sounds. This chapter confirms Alorese as a separate subgroup within the Western Lamaholot cluster with the exclusive sound change of PWL *t > PAL *ʔ in final position. There are also other sound changes that are completely regular in Alorese, such as PWL *y > PAL *ʤ and PWL *ə > PAL *e, but these changes are attested in the other Western Lamaholot varieties (either completed or incomplete), and are thus not exclusive to Alorese. In addition, I present evidence for a lower-level subgroup within Alorese, which I call Straits Alorese and includes varieties spoken in the Pantar Strait area: Ternate, Buaya, Alor Besar, Alor Kecil, and Dulolong. This subgroup is proposed based on the shared sound change of PAL *w > *f* in all positions, PAL *ai > *ei*, and the addition of the syllables *uŋ*, *iŋ* and *aŋ* in word-final position.

Loanwords in Alorese and the Alor-Pantar languages indicate a number of stages of contact, as shown in Chapter 6. The earliest stage is reflected in loanwords that can be reconstructed to PAL. Some more recent contact scenarios are observable through loanwords that are attested in the varieties spoken over smaller areas. The more widespread the AP loanwords in Alorese, the earlier the borrowing took place; the narrower the spread of the AP loanwords in Alorese, the more recently the borrowing took place. In addition, the geographic distribution of loanwords in Alorese can indicate which were the donor languages and which were the recipient varieties.

Through this combined study of linguistic and oral history, I confirm that Alorese separated from Western Lamaholot at least 600 years ago. The ancestors of the Alorese-speaking groups first arrived in the northeastern part of Pantar. They formed communities on the coasts and slowly spread to many pockets along the northern coastlines of the Alor-Pantar islands. There is agreement between the results from the oral history description and the historical linguistic analysis. In particular, this dissertation reveals that varieties spoken in northeast Pantar, such as Helangdohi, Wailawar, Pandai, Bana, and Munaseli, tend to retain archaic final consonants that reflect PMP and PFL sounds; moreover, the location of these conservative varieties coincides with the geographic area where the ancestors of the Alorese-speaking groups arrived on Pantar around half a millennium ago.