

# 36

Presentation date: March, 2021

Date of acceptance: May, 2021

Publication date: July, 2021

## INTERPRETING ORAL

HISTORY FROM THE ALORESE PEOPLE IN EAST INDONESIA

### INTERPRETACIÓN DE LA HISTORIA ORAL DEL PUEBLO ALORESE EN INDONESIA ORIENTAL

Yunus Sulistyono<sup>1</sup>

E-mail: [ys122@ums.ac.id](mailto:ys122@ums.ac.id)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5136-5486>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta. Indonesia- Leiden University Centre for Linguistics. The Netherlands.

#### Suggested citation (APA, 7<sup>th</sup> edition)

Sulistyono, Y. (2021). Interpreting oral history from the Alorese people in east Indonesia. *Revista Universidad y Sociedad*, 13(4), 339-350.

#### ABSTRACT

The present study aims to show a way of interpreting oral history from an Austronesian speaking community of Alorese in East Indonesia. I aim to look at the past time of the Alorese people through their oral history, particularly stories about migration. I visited 14 Alorese villages on the island of Alor and Pantar in the Indonesian province of East Nusa Tenggara and conducted interviews with local traditional leaders. The 14 villages are Kangge, Marica, Beang Onong, Baranusa, Wailawar, Helandohi, Pandai, Bana, Munaseli, Buaya, Ternate, Alor Besar, Alor Kecil, and Dulolong. These villages are located in several coastal pockets that cover a travel distance over 100 kilometers by boat. In this study, I use mixed methods of survey and interview. The results show a chronology from early arrival of the Alorese people to the most recent migration. It shows how oral history contributes to the reconstruction of history in a community that has no written tradition.

**Keywords:** Alorese, interpreting, oral history, migration, east Indonesia.

#### RESUMEN

El presente estudio tiene como objetivo mostrar una forma de interpretar la historia oral de una comunidad de habla austronesia de Alorese en el este de Indonesia. Mi objetivo es analizar el tiempo pasado del pueblo alorese a través de su historia oral, en particular las historias sobre migración. Visité 14 pueblos de Alorese en la isla de Alor y Pantar en la provincia indonesia de East Nusa Tenggara y realicé entrevistas con líderes tradicionales locales. Las 14 aldeas son Kangge, Marica, Beang Onong, Baranusa, Wailawar, Helandohi, Pandai, Bana, Munaseli, Buaya, Ternate, Alor Besar, Alor Kecil y Dulolong. Estos pueblos están ubicados en varios bolsillos costeros que cubren una distancia de viaje de más de 100 kilómetros en bote. En este estudio, utilicé métodos mixtos de encuesta y entrevista. Los resultados muestran una cronología desde la llegada temprana de la gente de Alorese hasta la migración más reciente. Muestra cómo la historia oral contribuye a la reconstrucción de la historia en una comunidad que no tiene tradición escrita.

**Palabras clave:** Alorese, interpretación, historia oral, migración, este de Indonesia.

## INTRODUCTION

The goal of this study is to look at the past time of the Alorese people through their oral history, particularly stories about migration. The stories are summarized chronologically so they can provide insights into what happened in the past. In order to achieve this goal, I visited 14 Alorese villages and collected video recordings containing interviews conducted with local traditional leaders. The 14 villages are Kangge, Marica, Beang Onong, Baranusa, Wailawar, Helandohi, Pandai, Bana, Munaseli, Buaya, Ternate, Alor Besar, Alor Kecil, and Dulolong. These villages are located in several coastal pockets that cover a travel distance over 100 kilometers by boat. Figure 1 shows the location of the villages.



Figure 1. Locations of the Alorese villages.

The eastern-most village is called Kangge, located on Kangge Island. To the east of Kangge, lies the nearby village called Marica. Further to the east, lies a newly established village, called Beang Onong. Around ten kilometers to the southeast, Baranusa is located. Up to the north, in northeast Pantar, a large number of Alorese groups are settled in the villages of Wailawar, Pandai, Bana, Helandohi, and Munaseli. In this area, most of the villages are located near the sea, except Helandohi, which is located in the interior mountains. Further to the east, in the Straits of Pantar, the Alorese occupy two islands, called Ternate and Buaya. On Ternate, they share the island with speakers of a Papuan Alor-Pantar language, called Reta. On the Alor Peninsula, the Alorese live in three main villages: Alor Besar, Alor Kecil, and Dulolong. Outside of these villages, there are Alorese people living in small groups in largely populated areas, such as Kabir, Kokar, and Kalabahi which are populated by mixed communities.

Studies on Alorese oral history mainly discuss themes on the history of wars, political alliances, myths, and legends about the beginning of a certain Alorese community. Lemoine (1969), is one of the first descriptions of oral history of the Alorese people. The description focuses on the Alorese community settled in northeast Pantar. In this publication, narratives about the arrivals of people from Java and a war between Munaseli and Pandai are described.

Gomang (1993) discusses political alliances among several Alorese kingdoms based on oral history. The political alliances were used to display the Alorese traditional values in creating harmony among communities inhabiting areas that had much local conflict. This depiction is based on the interpretation of oral history obtained from three villages on the Alor Peninsula, namely Alor Besar, Alor Kecil, and Dulolong.

Rodemeier (2006), is a description of oral narratives of the Alorese people living in northeast Pantar. This study focuses on the discussion of the Alorese myths, legends, and forms of rituals. The myths include stories about the beginning of

the Alorese people in the mountains of northeast Pantar, particularly in the village of Helandohi. Here, a legend about two babies who are believed to be the ancestors of today's Alorese people is described. In addition, several forms of rituals related to story telling are described.

Wellfelt (2016), is based on a study that seeks to understand themes of indigenous history, socio-geographical grouping, actors, and colonial interference in many communities across Alor Island. This study develops a method called *historyscapes*, in which various heterogeneous sources were incorporated to understand the connections of local people and non-existing geographical references. One chapter of this publication discusses the historyscape of the Alor Peninsula (Wellfelt, 2016). The discussion covers history of the Alorese people living in villages of Alor Besar, Alor Kecil, Dulolong, and on islands in the Pantar Strait, namely Ternate and Buaya. In this chapter by Wellfelt (2016), stories about ancestors and conflicts among communities on Alor are discussed. Furthermore, this study compares oral history among the coastal Alorese speaking community and the non-Alorese speaking mountain community on the Alor Peninsula.

In linguistic studies of the Alorese language, it is usually stated that the Alorese speakers are descendants of groups migrating eastward from the Western Lamaholot area, which includes the eastern part of Flores, and the Islands Adonara, Solor, and coastal areas of Lembata (Stokhof, 1975; Doyle, 2010; Klamer, 2011; Moro, 2018, 2019; Moro & Fricke, 2020). Based on legends about the arrival of Javanese king who came to Pantar around 600 years ago, it has been suggested that the groups from the Western Lamaholot area settled on Pantar roughly in the first half of 14<sup>th</sup> century.

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, I use mixed methods of survey and interview. I conducted a survey by visiting 14 villages and carried out interviews with the local traditional leaders as my consultants. In this section, I discuss the data collection, limitations, and how I analyze the stories.

The data include historical narratives in the form of videotaped oral testimonies that were collected through interviews during fieldwork conducted in 2018. The interviews were conducted with the local *tetua adat* who understand the details of the local oral history and who have the rights to tell historic stories. A set of questions was prepared in advance for the interview. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian and thus the oral stories are told in Indonesian. A typical interview lasted for around half hour to one hour. During the interview, at least one consultant

was present in front of the camera. In addition, two or three other elders were present in the same room to give input and corrections.

In the present study, some limitations should be addressed. First, the interviews were conducted in direct 'questions and answers' sessions with the researcher during which the consultants were telling short narratives about their oral history. Therefore, no full narration of stories is documented or recorded. Second, the scope of the present discussion only covers oral history about migration stories. Data collected on other Alorese cultural features during the interviews were excluded. Third, only fourteen out of roughly twenty Alorese groups living across the Alor-Pantar Archipelago were sampled. Lastly, the discussion about Alorese clans covers only some of the Alorese clans. These clans are the ones that show a relatively clear naming pattern. The remaining clans were excluded.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Table 1, I show examples of how oral testimonies are analyzed. The left column is a direct transcription of the interview using the Indonesian language, which is sometimes mixed with the local Malay variety. The right column is a free translation in English. The free translations are always marked with quotation marks '...'. I added notes in square brackets to make the meaning clearer. Furthermore, important parts within the transcriptions are highlighted. The fragment in this table tells a legend about the beginnings of the Alor Kecil Village.

Table 1. Fragment of an oral narrative from the Alor Kecil account.

1. Desa Alor Kecil ini dahulunya ada penghuni tapi masih terpencar, tidak berkumpul.	1. 'Alor Kecil used to be inhabited by people, but not united [as one community].'
2. Masih berkelompok-kelompok di masing-masing wilayah begitu.	2. '[They] lived in small groups within their own territories.'
3. Terus, datang seseorang yang namanya Saku Bala Duli.	3. 'And then, a person named Saku Bala Duli arrived.'
4. Dia ini yang melihat bahwa kalau memang ada orang satu wilayah yang ada orang tetapi masih terpencar seperti begini, berarti tidak dapat berbuat sesuatu.	4. 'He thought, if people are not united [living at one place together], they cannot do anything.'

5. Karena itu, dia sengaja mendatangi dari satu kelompok ke kelompok yang lainnya meminta kalau dapat mereka berkumpul kemudian membicarakan bagaimana kalau bisa mereka buka satu lahan begitu untuk membuat satu perkampungan.	5. 'Therefore, he deliberately came to each group and asked them if they can gather around and talk about a plan to open the land [at a certain place] and build a village.'
6. Ternyata ini diterima dengan baik.	6. 'Apparently, this [suggestion] was well-accepted.'
7. Jadi, ada satu kelompok yang datangnya dari Munaseli, namanya Bapak Mau.	7. 'Then, there is a group from Munaseli, [his leader was] called Bapak [means 'father'] Mau.'
8. Dia ini punya kepandaian untuk menimba besi menjadi parang, menjadi pisau, menjadi linggis.	8. 'He had an ability to forge iron into machetes, knives, and crowbars.'

In this account, a character named *Saku Bala Duli* is mentioned in line 3. The locals believe that he was the one who built the Alor Kecil community. In addition, this account also states arrivals from Munaseli (Pantar) in line 7. The story presented in the table is apparently a mix of two separate tales. Lines 1-6 sketch the arrival of an important figure (*Saku Bala Duli*) who is regarded as the founder of the Alor Kecil community. The descendants of *Saku Bala Duli* are now members of primary clans in the Alor Kecil village. Then, lines 7-8 tell the arrivals of people from Munaseli (located on Pantar). Here, my consultant mentions a character named *Bapak Mau*. Based on my interview, the descendants of *Bapak Mau* had become a secondary clan in the Alor Kecil community because its ancestors, depicted here as *Bapak Mau*, arrived later than *Saku Bala Duli*.

Generally, stories about the beginning of the Alorese people do not go back to the creation of men, as most stories of Western Lamaholot speaking groups in the Flores-Lembata area do. The stories rather point to certain locations where their ancestors came from. Moreover, the stories are heavily concerned about the order of arrivals of the ancestors.

Here, I discuss six events that mark migrations of the Alorese people around the Alor-Pantar Archipelago. The events include: (i) the flood on Rusa Island, (ii) foreign arrivals on Pantar, (iii) the rise and fall of the Munaseli Kingdom, (iv) the expansion of the Pandai Kingdom, (v) the flood on Lengan-Batang Islands, and (vi) the expansion to Ternate and Buaya.

In the village Marica, located in the west of Pantar (see Figure 1), people mainly work as seaweed farmers and fishermen. They often go to the Islands of Lengan-Batang in the north in order to harvest seaweed and sell it to buyers from Makassar or Buton (south Sulawesi). They also regularly go to nearby islands, such as Kambing and Rusa when fishing. Similar activities are observed in nearby villages: Beang Onong and Baranusa. People in these villages regularly travel by boat to the nearby islands.

People from Pantar sometimes also go to Rusa Island to hunt deer. The name *Rusa* means 'deer' in Malay. To the community in west Pantar, including the Alorese, Rusa Island is a place that offers resources. However, to the people from the Island of Lembata (east of Rusa), Rusa Island is seen as a sacred place. Barnes (1974), states that people from Lembata consider Rusa Island as the place to which the souls of the dead go. This view is probably related to the scarce travel activities of fishermen from Lembata to Pantar due to strong sea currents. It is widely known that the waters in the strait between Lembata and Pantar are very dangerous. Fishermen can only cross the strait at very specific times. If they fail, dead bodies are usually buried on nearby islands, such as Rusa, and cannot be brought back to Lembata (Barnes, 1996).

Within the Alorese communities on Pantar and Alor, there is a legend of a flood on Rusa Island that caused islands to be divided and new islands to emerge. My consultants in Marica believe that Rusa was once part of Pantar. In addition, my consultants in Alor Kecil claimed that Pantar and Alor were originally one island that had split due to a flood causing the emergence of the Islands of Rusa and Kambing. Furthermore, my consultant in Baranusa said that people from a kingdom on Rusa fled to the mountains of Pantar because of the flood. In Table 2, I present oral testimonies of these accounts in a comparative way.

Table 2. Marica, Alor Kecil, and Baranusa accounts about flood story on Rusa Island.

Marica account	Alor Kecil account	Baranusa account
Bapak lihat dari sana itu to, ujung lagi. Tsunami naik ini, baru kita hanya bukan menyeberang dengan perahu. Kita hanya menyeberang dengan kaki cari tempat saja. Kita bukan orang pelarian.	Itu menurut cerita raja kerajaan di sana dipimpin oleh Bapak Raja Lapi Loma. [...] Dulunya Pantar dengan Alor itu satu. Tetapi karena air bah, Pantar dan Alor terpisah lalu muncul Pulau Rusa dan Pulau Kambing. Raja Lapi Loma itu raja yang tertua di Alor. Itu letaknya di antara Pantar dan Alor. Sudah tenggelam.	Koli Rawang itu kerajaan di Pulau Rusa. Itu penduduk dari sana karena akibat pengaruh tsunami itu yang mereka lari datang membentuk kerajaan di gunung.
'You look over there, on the tip. The tsunami rose, then we did not cross here by boat. We only crossed [the strait] by foot, looked for new place. We were not fugitives.'	'According to stories, the kingdom over there [Pointing west, referring to Rusa] was led by King Lapi Loma. [...] In the past, Pantar and Alor were one [land]. Because of the flood, Pantar and Alor split up, then Rusa and Kambing emerged. The King [dom] Lapi Loma is the oldest kingdom in Alor. It is located between Alor and Pantar. It has already sunk [due to the flood].'	'Koli Rawang Kingdom was on Rusa Island. People from there fled because of tsunami and formed a kingdom in the mountain [possibly referring to northeast Pantar mountain; Helandohi].'

This tale about divided islands and emergence of new islands are attested in all three accounts which are geographically far apart (see Figure 1). In the Marica account, the narrator describes an event of the rising sea water. When the flood came, his ancestors rescued themselves by walking from Rusa to Pantar, implying the Pantar mainland was accessible by foot. In the Alor Kecil account, the narrator presents a view on the location of Rusa Island, as if it is located between Alor and Pantar. It is plausible that, from the point of view of Alor Kecil, any islands located in the south and west of Pantar are considered by the locals to be located between Alor and Pantar. This is because one passes these islands when following the coastline of Pantar. In this account, a now sunken kingdom on Rusa, led by *King Lapi Loma*, is pointed out. In addition, the Baranusa account recounts a kingdom, named *Koli Rawang* that collapsed because of the flood.

The legend about the lost civilization on Rusa is also discussed in Barnes (1982), in which archeological evidence of a ring, a figure on a knoll, and an upright monolith are mentioned. Moreover, a statement of my consultant in the village of Beang Onong testifies that when people go to Rusa Island to hunt deer, they can see still the ruins of the kingdom.

The story about the *Koli Rawang* Kingdom is known to the Alorese people in west Pantar through the flood myth. The kingdom is believed to be the oldest kingdom in Alor. In northeast Pantar, there is also a myth about the beginning of the Alorese people, involving a flood and two babies (Rodemeier, 2006). The two babies (named *Helan* and *Dohi*) were found after a flood and they were then raised by a couple living in the mountains around today's Helandohi. The legend of Rusa in west Pantar strongly correlates with the story from Helandohi, where their ancestors were believed to be the two babies who survived the flood. A more detailed narration on the flood story on Rusa Island is narrated by my consultant in Kangge. Table 3 presents a part of the narration.

Table 3. The Kangge account about flood story on Rusa.

1. Menurut legenda cerita orang tua, itu legenda tsunami itu terjadi di Pulau Rusa.	1. 'According to legend, the flood happened on Rusa Island.'
2. Sebelum orang Munaseli ke sini.	2. '[It was] before the Munaseli people came here.'
3. Belum, itu tahun yang tidak bisa kita tentukan.	3. 'Not yet, we cannot say the year [because he doesn't know]'
4. Sudah lama.	4. 'It was long time ago.'
5. Ini menurut sejarah yang diceritakan oleh orang tua Alor.	5. 'This is according to a story told by our elders of Alor.'
6. Dan ada orang-orang khusus yang waktu itu ada di Pulau Rusa.	6. '[At that time], there were people on Rusa Island.'
7. Dan dengan adanya tsunami itu mereka lari.	7. 'Because of the flood, they ran away.'
8. Ada yang ke sini.	8. 'Some of them arrived here.'
9. Dalam pengertian artinya raja itu yang disebut dengan Lapi Lomang.	9. 'Meaning, there was a king called Lapi Lomang.'
10. Raja Lapi Lomang dari Istrinya Samu Makiwang.	10. 'King Lapi Lomang and his wife Samu Makiwang.'
11. Dia itu mendalami di sana tinggal di sana dan menurut sejarah yang saya belajar di orang tua dulu itu, dengan punya anak istri kemudian dengan adanya peristiwa air bah itu maka mereka tinggalkan Pulau Rusa waktu itu.	11. 'He stayed there for a long time and based on stories that I learned from the elders, he had wife and children, and then because of the flood, they left Rusa Island.'
12. Tapi raja Lapi Lomang datang di sini kemudian anaknya yang disebut dalam sejarah Saku Bala Duli, itu sudah sampai di Alor.	12. 'But King Lapi Lomang arrived here and then his children, mentioned in stories, named Saku Bala Duli, had reached Alor.'
13. Yang dia kawin dengan istri orang alor yang tinggal di Alor Kecil yang punya keturunan ada di sana.	13. 'In which he then married a wife in Alor and he stayed in Alor Kecil and had offspring there.'
[...]	[...]*
14. Dan dia kerajaan Koli Rawang Wang Weni yang tenggelam ke muka.	14. 'And the Kingdom of Koli Rawang Wang Weni has sunken.'
15. Ke muka tenggelam sesudah itu baru dengan adanya air bah naik menyeberang. Hancurnya munaseli ini kemudian.	15. 'It has sunk and then because of the flood, the people crossed the strait. The collapse of Munaseli Kingdom was at the later time.'
16. Menurut sejarah Koli Rawang itu hancur duluan.	16. 'According to history, Koli Rawang Kingdom sunk first.'
17. Ini di pulau rusa pokoknya di barat sini.	17. 'This happened on Rusa Island on the west from here.'
18. Itu sampai di Tude.	18. 'It reached Tude (West Pantar)'
19. Tapi karena ada bencana penduduknya tersebar.	19. 'But because of the disaster, the people spread.'

\*This medial part is left out.

In this Kangge account, line one demonstrates the location of the flood; Rusa Island. In line 2, repeated in line 15, the narrator stresses that the flood happened before refugees from Munaseli escaped a war defeat. A character, named *Lapi Lomang* is mentioned in line 9. This character is similar to King Lapi Loma stated in the Alor Kecil account in Table 2. In line 12, the character *Saku Bala Duli* is, again, mentioned referring to the ancestor of the Alor Kecil people. Moreover, the Kingdom of *Koli Rawang* is also stated in line 14 and 16, similarly to the Baranusa account in Table 2.

The legend about a sunken kingdom on Rusa is sometimes linked to Lapan Batang flood because both have a similar type of event, which is the rising of the sea water. Barnes (1982), predicted that the flood on Rusa took place in 1450 and linked it with the Lapan-Batang origin of the Lamaholot people.

A statement by Rodemeier (2006), implies that there was a kingdom that collapsed due to a flood that happened five generations before the Javanese people arrived on Pantar in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. If we count a generation as 25 years, the flood on Rusa might have taken place around the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In Table 3, my consultant from Kayang testifies that the flood on Rusa took place before the war in Munaseli. In lines 15-16, he says that the kingdom on Rusa first sunk, followed by war in Munaseli. Therefore, I conclude that the flood on Rusa is not the same as the Lapan-Batang flood and that it happened before the Javanese (foreigners from west Nusantara) arrived on Pantar.

In the Western Pantar (non-Austronesian) community, there is a similar legend referring to ancestors from Rusa.

However, it is unclear how this migration from Rusa is regarded in the Western Pantar community. Nevertheless, based on my investigation, I suggest that the people from Rusa were probably a pre-Alorese community. Rusa seems to be a stepping stone between Lembata and Pantar. After the flood on Rusa, some groups arrived in the northeast Pantar mountain, depicted in the legend as the two babies (*Helan* and *Dohi*). Some other groups arrived in Alor Kecil, depicted in the legend as *Saku Bala Duli*.

Stories about foreign arrivals on Pantar are widely attested in the villages located in northeastern Pantar (see Figure 1). The northeast Pantar area is where the coastal and mountain Alorese groups are settled. The coastal villages include Wailawar, Pandai, Bana, and Munaseli, while the only mountain village is Helandohi. In this area, there is a traditional treaty, called *Helang anang Dohi anang* lit. 'Helang child Dohi child'. This treaty is acknowledged by all five villages in northeast Pantar: Helandohi, Wailawar, Pandai, Bana, and Munaseli. It contains an agreement that villages in the coastal area are considered the children of Helandohi. The names *Helan* and *Dohi* go back to the legend about two babies found after the flood on Rusa Island. A narrative in which the treaty was mentioned is presented in Rodemeier (2006).

The coastal villages were regarded as children of Helandohi because they were immigrants. The original owners of the land were people in Helandohi. In the past, they gave permission to the foreign immigrants to open villages in the coastal area. These coastal villages developed into kingdoms and their stories are depicted in the local oral history. Table 4 contains a part of a text about kingdoms in the coastal northeast Pantar.

Table 4. A fragment from an oral history based text about arrival from the west.

<p>1. Terjadinya kerajaan Pandai Baranusa ini akibat datangnya seorang dari asal Jawa Sekitar tahun 1310 yang namanya Majapahit sebab pada 1309 terjadi pecah perang antara Baginda Raja Kertarajasa dari Majapahit yang berpusat di Kediri dengan Rangga Lawe sebagai adipati Tuban.</p>	<p>1. 'The beginning of the Pandai-Baranusa Kingdom was when a person called Majapahit from Java arrived in 1310 due to a war in 1309 between King Kertarajasa from Majapahit, which was centered in Kediri, and Rangga Lawe, the leader of the Tuban regency.'</p>
---	---

The text tells a story about the arrival of people from Java. The first striking feature is the mentioning of the year 1309 and 1310, whereas Lemoine (1969); and Rodemeier (2006), do not state specific years for the Javanese arrivals. The mentioning of this specific time is also seen in other local texts, such as texts in Baranusa and Alor Besar. It is unclear how the local consultants and the author of the texts came up with these years. However, they often correlate with the history of the Javanese empire, Majapahit.

The history of Majapahit is widely known because it is part of Indonesia's national history textbooks. A Javanese character *Rangga Lawe* is mentioned in the fragment in Table 4. According to the Indonesian history textbooks (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 1984), *Rangga Lawe* rebelled against the Majapahit government in 1309. It seems that the authors of the text given in Table 4 connected an event on Java, which was recorded in the national history text books, with

their own interpretation about the Javanese presence on Pantar.

The story in Table 4 is actually a simplified version of a more complex oral narrative. The narrative involves a tale about an ancestor in the form of a fish (or sometimes an eagle) who turned into a woman. The woman was found on Java by two brothers. One of them then married the woman. After the marriage, they moved to Pantar and their offspring became the today's Alorese people (Gomang, 1993; Lemoine, 1969; Rodemeier, 2006). Table 5 below presents a fragment of this narrative based on the Pandai account.

**Table 5. The Pandai account on the arrival of Javanese people.**

1. Jadi ada dua saudara laki-laki, Akliae dan Majapahit.	1. 'There were two brothers, Akliae and Majapahit.'
2. Yang kakak Majapahit, adiknya Akliae.	2. 'Majapahit is the older brother and Akliae is the younger brother.'
3. Mereka berdua ke sini sedang memancing begitu.	3. 'They both were looking for fish.'
4. Mereka ke sini memancing.	4. 'They arrived here [because of] fishing.'
5. Mancingnya di Jawa.	5. 'The fishing [activity] was on Java.'
6. Lalu dia ini kan setelah dia obati ini, ikan yang dia ambil pancing ini sudah suruh dia berpakaian sudah.	6. 'Then, after he was healed [from unknown], he asked the fish to get dressed.'
7. Bagaimana suruh dia berpakaian ko, datang bisa, turun bisa layani orang.	7. 'Why did he ask her to get dressed? So that she can come down and serve people.'
8. Jadi sekarang tadi dia naik, dia berubah menjadi manusia biasa.	8. 'So now when she climbed up, she [the fish] had turned into a human.'
[...]	[...]
9. Sehingga ada cerita di darat bahwa ada hubungan kawin mawin antara laut dengan darat.	9. 'There is a story that there was a sexual intercourse between the sea and the land.'
10. Jadi keturunan Akliae dan Majapahit kawin dengan orang di gunung.	10. 'So the offspring of Akliae and Majapahit married people in the mountain.'

This narrative is the basis of the text presented in Table 4. The other accounts of this story differs this account in some details, such as that the woman was originally an

eagle instead of a fish. Generally, however, each account has a similar plot. These differences are nevertheless expected because oral narratives commonly incorporate not only sequence of events or facts, but also emphasise the dramatization of the story (Abrams, 2010).

Today, several Alorese clans believe that they are descendants of these Javanese people from Majapahit. These clans are generally acknowledged to have a higher status in the society because of their Javanese roots. Basically, the theory about Javanese presence on Pantar is based on the mentioning of the Island of Galiyao (today's Pantar) in the *Negarakertagama* chronicles, written by Rakawi Prapanca of Majapahit in 1365AD (Pigeaud, 1962; Barnes, 1982). Pantar was referred to as one of the islands conquered by the Majapahit Empire in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This Javanese association is mainly found in clans in the villages of Pandai and Baranusa.

Apart from the Javanese ancestors, several other Alorese clans consider themselves to have ancestors from *Malaka* (a town in today's Malaysia). People from Malaka are believed to have established a kingdom in Munaseli.

The Alor-Pantar region has been known for its local conflicts and battles for many centuries (Gomang, 1993:3). The Alorese people who live there were involved in the conflicts and battles as well. One of many famous battles is the war between Munaseli and Pandai. In this section, I present stories about the prosperous time of the Munaseli Kingdom until its major defeat against Pandai.

As stated earlier, the beginning of the Munaseli Kingdom goes back to their ancestors from Malaka. Thus, the people of Munaseli have a different history from the community who already settled in Pandai a few decades earlier and claimed themselves to be of the Javanese descent. Munaseli is located in the east of the northeast Pantar Peninsula, while Pandai is located in the west of the peninsula. The distance between the two villages is around 10 kilometers (see Figure 1).

Stories about the Munaseli Kingdom are often related to the richness of this kingdom and a magic rooster (Gomang, 1993; Rodemeier, 2006). As a universal folk character, the rooster from Munaseli has a specific power to grant wishes. Often, it grants gold. The rooster is believed to be the source of Munaseli's wealth.

During the period of the Munaseli Kingdom, trading activities were centered in Munaseli, as Rodemeier (2006), gives a specific description about the trading empire of Munaseli. It is described as a long-lost civilization until the invasion by the Javanese-Pandai who forced the people from Munaseli to flee to Alor and west Pantar. The Pandai

invasion of Munaseli was motivated by a conflict among traders. Lemoine (1969), explains that the wealth of Munaseli caused jealousy from its neighboring groups. This interpretation is confirmed by local narratives from three villages: Bana, Wailawar, and Pandai, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Three accounts on the war between Munaseli and Pandai.

Bana account	Wailawar account	Pandai account
Perang itu kan masa kerajaan. Kerajaan Muna-seli dengan kerajaan Pandai. Baru timbul angkat peperangan di Bana sini. Perangnya di Bana sini. Di sini kan pasar, di Bana. Karena mereka datang ke pasar Bana ini, orang Pandai juga datang, dari Munaseli juga datang. Lalu dari Pandai datang bawa garam, ikan, dengan kapur. Sedangkan dari Munaseli datang bawa emas. Datang baku tukar, lalu dorang baku keris di situ, baku hina. [...] Ada baku hina akhirnya ada perang. Yang menang itu dari Pandai.	Kalau dulu kerajaan Munaseli itu dihancurkan oleh Lahar Blegur. Yang menangnya Lahar Blegur. Sementara jual beli antara barang lokal dengan emas.	Jadi orang Munaseli turun dengan emas biji. Jadi kalau mau ditukar dengan jagung atau beras, atau tukar dengan ikan. Nah ini pakai dengan emas sedangkan orang dari kampung lain mereka hanya tukar dengan sirih pinang. [...] Baku hina sudah. Terjadi baku hina inilah makanya pada saat itu sampai juga perjanjian perang.
'The war was in the era of kingdoms. It was between Munaseli and Pandai. The war was here, in Bana village. There was a market here in Bana. When they came to Bana, Pandai people came here, Munaseli people also came here. Pandai people came with salt, fish, and betel nuts while the Munaseli people came with golds. They traded and mocked each other. [...] Because of the mocking, the war broke out. The winner was Pandai.'	'In the past, Munaseli was destroyed by Lahar Blegur. The winner was Lahar Blegur. While they were trading local goods and golds there [pointing to the north, referring to Bana].'	'So people from Munaseli came [down] with their gold. So they traded their gold with corns and rice or fish. They traded their golds while people from other villages only trade with betel. [...] Then they mocked each other. This is why they declared war.'

The village *Bana* is located in between Pandai and Munaseli (see Figure 1). This place used to be a busy market during the time when coastal Alorese groups of Pandai and Munaseli lived side by side. The character *Lahar Blegur* is mentioned only in the Wailawar account, but not in the other accounts. The trading situation was described as a busy market where people from Munaseli trade with golds and people from other places trade with fish and betel. This social inequality gave rise to envy, which led to a war.

Among the coastal villages in northeast Pantar, narratives about the war are attested in Bana, Wailawar, and Pandai, but not in Munaseli. In Munaseli, when my consultant was asked about the war, he did not explicitly mention the war. Instead, he narrated some highly detailed stories about the beginning of the Munaseli Kingdom. I assume that this is because the defeat of Munaseli is considered shameful by the locals.

The Munaseli war caused the collapse of the Munaseli Kingdom. The locals believe that several entities were involved in this war. My consultant in Pandai stated that people from Java, Kedang, and Atauro (Portuguese: *Atauru*, part of Timor Leste) were called as allies. Therefore, the war is considered a great war because it involves people from overseas. The Munaseli Kingdom lasted for three generations. The first king was *Taru Amang*; the second king was *Babu Taru*; and the third king was *Sirang Bagung*. The written text sampled in Table 4 states that the kingdom was established in 1347. It collapsed three generations later, thus around 1420, due to the Pandai invasion.

After defeating Munaseli, Pandai became the political center in northeast Pantar. In a later development, Pandai expanded its territory to Alor Peninsula and west Pantar. In this section, I present stories on how people from Pandai reached Alor and established a kingdom in Alor Besar, named Bungabali Kingdom, and how they established Baranusa Kingdom in west Pantar.

The general consensus about the history of Pandai states that there was a couple from Java who came to Pantar and had five children. One child named *Dai Mauwolang* ruled the Pandai Kingdom; the other child named *Bara Mauwolang*

ruled the Baranusa Kingdom; and the child named *Tuli Mauwolang* ruled the Bungabali Kingdom in Alor Besar. The other two children ruled kingdoms in *Blagar* and *Kui*, two non-Alorese coastal communities in the area (see Figure 1). These five kingdoms were consolidated under a political alliance, called *Galiyao Watang Lema* ‘five coastal domains’ (Gomang, 1993).

The story about the flood on the Lengan-Batang Islands is known, not only in the Alorese community but also in the Lamaholot communities in east Flores and on Lembata. The locals there believe that the Islands Lengan-Batang were once inhabited by their ancestors. These ancestors had to flee to Lembata and other places because of a natural disaster.

The Alorese oral accounts do not mention much about a flood on Lengan-Batang Islands. Instead, when they were asked about the flood, some of them responded that it was not in their capacity to tell the story because their culture does not have historical ties with Lengan Batang. However, my consultant in Baranusa demonstrated a historic flood on Lengan Batang that caused people fleeing to Lembata. Table 6 contains a fragment of the interview in Baranusa.

Table 6. Part of interview in Baranusa about flood on Lengan-Batang Islands.

1. Suku Sandiata punya sumber kehidupan kegiatan ini di Pulau Lapang	1. ‘Clan Sandiata has a source of living from working on Lapang Island.’
2. Pulau Lapang Batang	2. ‘Lapang-Batang Islands.’
3. Mereka dulu hidup di sana satu kerajaan besar.	3. ‘They [their ancestors] used to live there [in a] big kingdom.’
4. Suku Sandiata ini mendominasi Pulau Lapang Batang.	4. ‘The clan Sandiata dominated the Lapang-Batang Islands.’
5. Ada bekas-bekas peninggalan masih ada.	5. ‘There are remains of the kingdom there.’
6. Karena akibat tsunami, maka penduduknya meninggal ada yang lari dengan perahu sampai di Lembata.	6. ‘Because of a tsunami, the people died and some of them fled [to other places] by boat [and] reached Lembata.’

The narrator was actually talking about the history of the Alorese clans. When he talks about the clan *Sandiata*, which consists apparently of descendants of people who once settled on Lengan-Batang Islands, the flood was mentioned. It made people from Lengan-Batang flee to Baranusa and Lembata.

According to oral history in Lamaholot, some of the Lamaholot people are descendants of the people from Lengan-Batang (Sulistiyono, 2015). Fricke (2019), states that the people on Lengan-Batang could have been part of the Alorese people who have settled on Pantar since at least the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Lamaholot clans who were originally from Lengan-Batang are referred to as *tena mao lit*. ‘boat float’. They are believed to be the refugees from the natural disaster in Lengan-Batang Islands.

Another big expansion of the Alorese people is the expansion to Ternate and Buaya. Ternate and Buaya are two small islands located in the strait between Alor and Pantar. An oral testimony from Buaya states that their ancestors were people from Pura who moved to Alor Besar and then moved to Ternate and Buaya. Pura is a bigger island located south of Buaya and Ternate. Table 7 presents the oral account from Buaya.

Table 7. Oral account from Buaya about the history of Ternate and Buaya.

1. Itu moyang kita tiga dengan keluarga Bapak Raja antar datang di Alor Besar.	1. ‘Our ancestors were from the three [villages] with the family of king who arrived in Alor Besar’
2. Datang di Alor Besar langsung tinggal di Alor Besar di kali tinggal di situ.	2. ‘Arrived in Alor Besar and then lived in Alor Besar, close to a river there.’
3. Tinggal di situ, tapi namanya kita dulu kan nenek moyang itu masih kristen.	3. ‘Lived there, but our ancestors were Christians.’
4. Habis tinggal di Alor Besar itu di Alor kering.	4. ‘Upon living in Alor Besar, Alor was [in] dry [season].’
5. Tapi namanya orang Pura itu, namanya, sudah minum, bicara banyak, makan juga bisa ribut.	5. ‘But they were people from Pura, they drink [traditional wine], they talk a lot, [and] they eat loudly.’
6. Orang Reta punya minum dari moyang kita.	6. ‘The Reta people have traditional wine from our ancestors.’
7. Akhirnya Bapak Raja bilang, ‘orang Pura datang tinggal di kita ini tapi ribut-ribut kita tidak bisa tidur.’	7. ‘Finally, the King said, “the people from Pura live with us but [they were] very noisy [so] we cannot sleep.”’
8. Jadi kasih mereka pin-dah.	8. ‘So they asked [them, the ancestors] to leave.’

9. Akhirnya itu moyang kita ini langsung dari Alor Besar.	9. 'Finally our ancestors [left] from Alor Besar.'
10. Dulu itu perahu besar, dulu kan pakai perahu.	10. '[They rowed] a big boat, they used to travel with boats.'
11. Bawa mereka ambil barang dari perahu, langsung dayung.	11. '[They] carried their belongings on the boat and rowed.'
12. Dua pulau ini masih kosong.	12. 'These two islands were empty.'

From the Buaya account, it is known that the king in Alor Besar was disturbed because of the noises made by the people from Pura. Therefore, the king ordered them to move to Ternate and Buaya. However, my consultant in Alor Kecil proposed that the king in Alor Besar ordered people to move there in order to prevent the Dutch occupation over the two islands. In line 5-6, the Reta association infers that the ancestor of today's residents of Ternate and Buaya were probably speakers of Reta. Reta is a non-Austronesian language (ISO 639-3 code: ret) spoken on Reta, Ternate and Alor Peninsula.

In line three, my consultant said that his ancestors were followers of the Christian religion. It is plausible that when the Reta people moved to Alor Besar, the Cristian religion had already spread through the Alor Archipelago. The Reta people then converted to Islam by following the king in Alor Besar. Then, the Alor Besar king ordered them to move to Ternate. In 1935, this Reta group on Ternate moved to Buaya because of a religion-related conflict (Gomang, 1993). Today, on Ternate, there are three villages; one of them is an Alorese speaking village and two of them are Reta speaking villages. In the north, the entire Buaya Island is inhabited by the Alorese speaking group.

## CONCLUSIONS

It has been shown that, based on oral history, the Alorese migration is characterized by events, such as floods and wars. The ancestors of the Alorese people were mixed of mountain people and migrants. There were people from the interior Alor-Pantar mountains and there were migrants on coastal Pantar who then merged with the inlanders and formed the Alorese community we see today. In addition, we have also seen the history of Alorese clans and how they correlate with the Alorese migration stories.

In the chronology, the first event demonstrated in the Alorese oral history is a natural disaster on Rusa Island. It caused people to flee from Rusa to Pantar (Helandohi) and Alor (Alor Kecil). The foreign arrivals on Pantar in the

14<sup>th</sup> century mark the beginning of political developments in the Alorese community in which local kingdoms began to unfold. Then, the people spread in eastern (Alor Besar) and western (Baranusa) directions. Furthermore, some relatively recent movements, such as the expansion to Marica, Dulolong, and the Islands of Ternate and Buaya, are also attested in the oral history.

## REFERENCES

- Abrams, L. (2010). *Oral history theory*. Routledge.
- Barnes, R. H. (1972). *Kedang: a study of the collective thought of an eastern Indonesian people*. (Doctoral dissertation). University of Oxford.
- Barnes, R. H. (1982). The Majapahit dependency Galiyao. *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, 138(4), 407-412.
- Barnes, R. H., & Barnes, R. H. (1996). *Sea hunters of Indonesia: Fishers and weavers of Lamalera*. Oxford University Press on Demand.
- Doyle, M. (2010). *Internal divisions of the Flores-Lembata subgroup of Central Malayo-Polynesian*. (Master Thesis). Leiden University.
- Fricke, H. L. A. (2019). *Traces of language contact: The Flores-Lembata languages in eastern Indonesia*. (Doctoral Thesis). Leiden University.
- Klamer, M. (2011). *A short grammar of Alorese (Austronesian)*. Lincom Europa.
- Lemoine, A. (1969). *Histoires de Pantar*. *L'Homme: Revue Francaise d'Anthropologie*, 9(4), 5-23.
- Moro, F. R. (2018). The Plural Word hire in Alorese: Contact-Induced Change from Neighboring Alor-Pantar Languages. *Oceanic Linguistics*, 57(1), 177-198.
- Moro, F. R. (2019). Loss of morphology in Alorese (Austronesian): Simplification in adult language contact. *Journal of Language Contact*, 12(2), 378-403.
- Moro, F. R., & Fricke, H. (2020). Contact-induced change in Alorese give-constructions. *Oceanic Linguistics*, 59(1), 116-147.
- Poesponegoro, M. D., & Notosusanto, N. (1984). *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia, Jilid 2*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka dan Kemendikbud RI. Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia.

- Rodemeier, S. (2006). Tutu kadire in Pandai-Munaseli: erzählen und erinnern auf der vergessenen Insel Pantar (Ostindonesien) (Vol. 12). LIT Verlag Münster.
- Stokhof, W. A. (1975). Preliminary notes on the Alor and Pantar languages (East Indonesia). The Australian National University.
- Wellfelt, E. (2016). Historyscapes in Alor: Approaching indigenous history in eastern Indonesia (Doctoral dissertation). Linnaeus University.