

The Perception of Ancestral History, Legends, and Myths of the Alorese Muslim Minority Group in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia

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Abstract: This paper comprehensively examines the perception of the Alorese about their ancestral history, legends, and myths. It describes the Alorese people's minority status, traces their ancestral lineage, explains the interaction dynamics between coastal and inland residents, moreover unveils their intrinsic legends and myths. The primary data were from oral history interviews conducted among the Alor people in 2018, 2020, and 2022. Through qualitative descriptive methodology, the findings highlight the coexistence of the minority Muslim community with interior inhabitants despite occasional tensions, notably in the area of Pantar Barat. The paper offers a nuanced understanding of the Alorese people's journey, emphasizing their resilient cultural identity amidst broader societal norms. It examines influences shaping Alor society since ancient migrations to modern developments and scrutinizes social dynamics, shedding light on factors influencing social cohesion and cultural continuity. Emphasizing myths and legends as integral to the Alorese culture, the study underscores their role in shaping collective consciousness and identity. In conclusion, it emphasizes the resilience and cultural richness of the Alorese community, calling for further research to deepen understanding and appreciation of their unique heritage.

Keywords: muslim minority group, Alor, ancestral history, legends, myths

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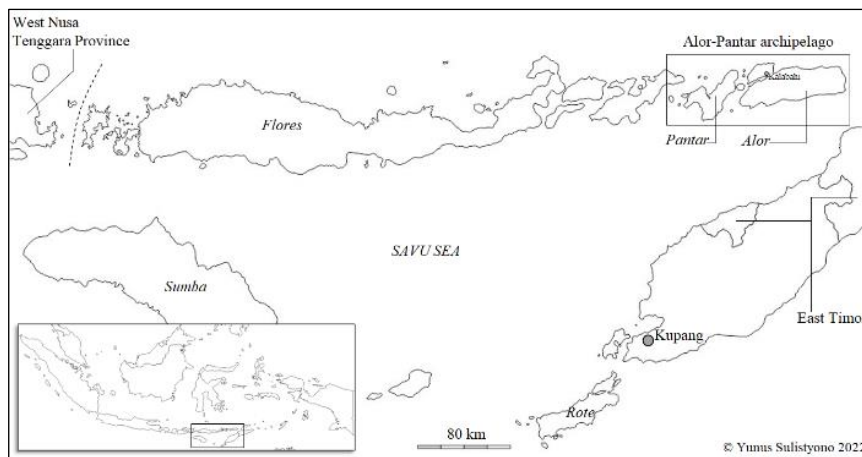
A. Introduction

The Alorese-speaking community in East Nusa Tenggara is a minority Muslim community amidst a majority of Christian believers. Thirty percent of the population in Alor Regency are Muslims, while 66% are Protestant Christians, and the remainder adhere to the Catholic faith (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008). Although Islam arrived in Alor as early as the 16th century, Christianity, introduced by European missionaries who initially stopped in Timor, has become the dominant religion in Alor, even at the provincial level, within East Nusa Tenggara Province (Aizid, 2016).

Alor Regency is located in the northeastern part of the East Nusa Tenggara province. It borders Lembata Regency to the west, Wetar Island and Atauro Island to the east, Flores Sea to the north, and Ombai Strait to the south. Figure 1. below illustrates East Nusa Tenggara Province and Alor Regency, located in the northeastern part of the figure.

Figure 1

The Indonesian Province of East Nusa Tenggara and the Regency of Alor (Indonesian: Kabupaten Alor)



There are two main islands in Alor Regency, namely Alor Island, which appears green and fertile at first glance, and Pantar Island, which appears drier at first glance. The regency capital of Alor is the city of Kalabahi, accessible by air or sea transportation from the provincial capital, Kupang. To reach Kalabahi, daily flights from Kupang last approximately one hour. Additionally, the city, known as Kenari City, can be accessed by sea transportation for an overnight journey. Pantar Island also has an airport currently under construction and is expected to be publicly

operational shortly after this article's publication. To reach Pantar Island, sea transportation options such as ferries or passenger ships depart daily from Kalabahi or Alor Kecil.

Coastal communities in Alor who practice Islam utilize the Alorese language for daily communication (Indonesian: Bahasa Alor; ISO 639-3: aol). Alorese stands as the sole Austronesian local language spoken in this area. Another Austronesian language used is Malay, their region's lingua franca, spoken by coastal Muslim communities in Alor. The languages spoken by inland inhabitants have different genealogical affiliations. They belong to the linguistic group of the non-Austronesian Alor-Pantar languages (Holton et al., 2012; Klamer, 2014; Robinson, 2015). There are over 20 Alor-Pantar languages spoken by inland inhabitants in Alor, highlighting the diversity and multi-ethnicity in Alor.

Since the languages spoken in the Alor-Pantar islands are predominantly non-Austronesian (Alor-Pantar languages), linguists note significant language contact between Austronesian and non-Austronesian speakers (Fricke, 2019b; Holton et al., 2012; Moro, 2018, 2019), primarily because Alorese is spoken at the interface between the Austronesian and the non-Austronesian language families. This contact has led to a mixed lexicon phenomenon, particularly evident in languages like Lamaholot and Alorese, where numerous non-Austronesian vocabulary items are incorporated into these languages (Fricke, 2019a). This linguistic dynamic underscores the complex interplay between different language groups in the region, shaping the linguistic and social landscape of the Alor-Pantar islands.

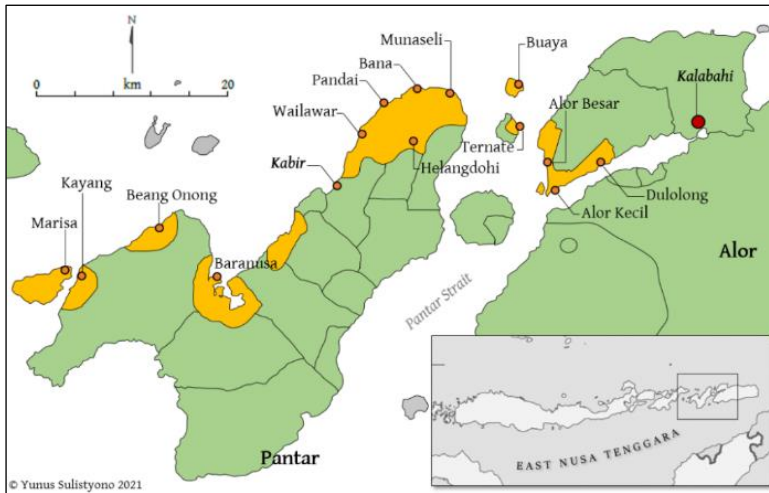
The Alorese Muslim minority group has a history of coexistence with the local inland inhabitants, dating back 500 years (Klamer, 2011; Sulistyono, 2022). Oral accounts, such as those documented by Sulistyono (2022), Wellfelt (2016), and (Rodemeier, 2006), shed light on the arrival of the Alorese people and their integration into the region. Additionally, historical narratives spanning over 3000 years reveal the presence of non-Austronesian language speakers, contributing to the region's cultural tapestry. Moreover, the relationship between the Alorese people and the inland inhabitants underscores the dynamic interactions and cultural exchanges that have shaped the region's social fabric over centuries (Du Bois, 1960). We gain insights into Alor's rich heritage and diverse community dynamics by exploring these historical narratives.

The Alorese community resides in approximately 20 villages scattered along the coast. These villages include those situated on the Alor Peninsula, including the villages of Dulolong, Alor Kecil, and Alor Besar, as well as settlements in the Pantar

Strait, like Buaya and Ternate. Additionally, communities thrive on Pantar Island itself, which include the villages of Munaseli, Helangdohi, Munaseli, Bana, Pandai, Wailawar, Baranusa, Beang Onong, Kayang, and Marisa, contributing to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the region. Figure 2 below illustrates the location of these villages.

The primary livelihood of the local population is predominantly fishing, with many relying on the sea for sustenance. Additionally, some individuals are involved in agriculture, cultivating crops to supplement their income. Markets are essential hubs for trade and commerce, with notable ones in Alor Kecil, Kabir, and Baranusa. Furthermore, beyond fishing and farming, the residents pursue diverse avenues of livelihood, contributing to the region's economic landscape.

Figure 2
The Linguistic Map of the Alor Region



In the upcoming sections, I delve into several key topics: 1) The status of the Alorese people as a minority within their region, 2) An exploration of the ancestral history of the Alorese people through the lens of oral history, 3) The dynamics of the relationship between the Alorese people and those residing in the interior areas, and 4) Examination of the legends and myths that have emerged within Alorese community over time.

This article discusses how the minority Muslim community in Alor perceives its history and its relationship with the Christian-majority group. Furthermore, the article explores the legends and myths that have developed within the coastal communities of Alor.

B. Methods

This study's data collection and analysis methodology utilizes oral history data comprising oral interview recordings and written documents. The interview recordings serve as primary sources of qualitative information (Lukacik & Bourdage, 2024), capturing individuals' voices, experiences, and perspectives through structured interviews. These recordings provide invaluable insights into the lived experiences, cultural practices, and historical events relevant to the research topic. Additionally, they offer a unique opportunity to access firsthand accounts and personal narratives that may need to be sufficiently documented elsewhere.

Complementing the oral interview recordings are various forms of written data, including transcripts of the interviews, historical documents, archival materials, personal correspondence, and official records. These written sources offer additional layers of context, background information, and corroborating evidence that enrich the research findings. They provide historical depth, allowing researchers to trace the evolution of cultural practices, societal norms, and linguistic phenomena. Moreover, written documents offer a glimpse into the broader socio-political context within which oral histories unfold, shedding light on factors such as colonialism, migration, and globalization that may influence the narratives. The summarized interviews and a list of consultants employed for the research are described in Table 1 below.

Table 1

List of interviews sourced from Dataverse.nl (Sulistyono, 2022)

Village	Consultant Detail	Interview
Alor Besar	Male, 61 years old	Oral history
Alor Kecil	Male, 69 years old	Oral history
Dulolong	Male, 63 years old	Oral history
Munaseli	Male, 68 years old	Oral history

The interview process includes questions about gathering oral traditions in the relevant village. The questions asked were, for instance, about the name and origin of the village, the origins of its residents, and the reasons for their migration. Questions also included inquiries about the number and origins of clans in the village, the indigenous people's ancestry, and any historical kingdoms' existence. The interviewers sought information on the languages spoken by ancestors, the

introduction of the Alorese language, and any historical conflicts involving the village, particularly those involving external clans. Additionally, the interview covered the historical relationships between the village and neighboring communities, the presence of settlers from other regions, the introduction of Islam, and any past natural disasters such as tsunamis. Cultural concepts like Lera Wulan Tana E kang and the presence of artistic performances or written historical sources were also explored.

Interpreting the collected data involves several iterative steps to extract meaningful insights and construct coherent narratives. Firstly, the data undergoes transcription, whereby audio recordings are meticulously transcribed into written or digital formats. This transcription process is crucial for preserving the integrity of the information and facilitating subsequent analysis. Subsequently, the interpreter thoroughly reads and examines the transcribed data, paying close attention to details, nuances, and patterns within the narratives. Through close reading and thematic analysis, the interpreter identifies recurring themes, motifs, and narrative structures that shape the storyline.

Organizing the data chronologically is another essential aspect of the interpretation process, enabling researchers to reconstruct temporal sequences of events, cultural practices, and linguistic changes. By arranging the information chronologically, researchers discern temporal trends, identify causal relationships, and contextualize individual narratives within broader historical trajectories. Furthermore, chronological organization facilitates comparisons across periods, regions, and social groups, improving the analysis's depth and complexity.

Researchers adopt a reflexive stance throughout the interpretation process, acknowledging their subjectivity, biases, and positionalities. Reflexivity involves critical self-awareness and ongoing reflection on the researcher's role in shaping the research process and interpreting the data. By embracing reflexivity, researchers can navigate ethical dilemmas, mitigate potential biases, and ensure the integrity and validity of the research findings.

In summary, the methodology employed in this study combines oral history data in both audio and written formats, facilitating a nuanced exploration of the research topic. Through meticulous transcription, close reading, chronological organization, and reflexive data analysis, researchers can derive rich insights and construct compelling narratives contributing to the broader understanding of the subject matter.

C. Results and Discussion

The Alorese: Muslim Minority Group in Alor

Islam arrived in Alor during the 16th century, marking a significant historical event for the region. Evidence of this early Islamic presence includes a manuscript of the Quran dating back to 1519, highlighting the enduring religious heritage of the community. Additionally, artifacts such as circumcision tools further attest to the Islamic cultural practices established in Alor centuries ago. Western observers have documented the presence of Muslim residents in Alor, providing valuable insights into their experiences and the prevailing conditions on the island during that period. These accounts shed light on the cultural, social, and religious dynamics shaping life in Alor at the time of Islam's introduction to the region.

The spread of Islam in Alor commenced with the arrival of Islamic preachers from Maluku. These preachers initiated the propagation of Islam, starting their efforts from the Pantar Strait. Legend stated they arrived by ship, marking the beginning of Islam's influence in the region. Following their arrival, some individuals from Maluku chose to settle in Alor, establishing a lasting presence notably in Baranusa, a Maluku tribe alongside families known as Likur. Baranusa also hosts their graves, serving as a testament to their enduring legacy in the community.

In each village throughout Alor, it is customary to find a substantial mosque, with some still being built. Notably, in the village of Munaseli, inhabitants coexist harmoniously with their Christian neighbors, evidenced by the presence of a church alongside the mosque. This interfaith cohabitation reflects a peaceful and tolerant community ethos prevailing in the region.

Followers of Islam predominantly inhabit villages along the coast of Alor, while those in the interior typically adhere to Christianity. This religious distribution can be traced back to historical events, where coastal residents embraced Islam earlier during the spread of religions. Conversely, European Christian missionaries initially faced challenges in spreading Christianity and had to begin their efforts among the inland population.

As a minority Muslim group, the Alor people are treated without discrimination, enjoying equal opportunities alongside others in their community. However, regarding political influence, the majority population wields more control. Nevertheless, the principle of justice is deeply valued and upheld within the Alor society, ensuring fairness and equality for all residents regardless of religious affiliation. Table 2 illustrates the perspective of the Alorese people regarding their views on equal opportunities regardless of religious beliefs.

Table 2

Interview Source on Alorese Perspective as A Muslim Minority Group

Identifier*	Interview	English translation
AOLYS_Baranus a_2018_07_18_C ultural_Question aire_Samsudin Lara-01	<p><i>Karena mereka datang berdagang membawa emas emas, kemudian membawa penyiaran agama, mereka itu ada pampang juk, jo itu artinya guru mengaji. Itu dari suku lamahala. Mereka membentuk suatu kelompok hidup mereka adalah berniaga. Bawa emas tykar padi tukar makanan makanan.</i></p> <p><i>Akhirnya sampai tinggal di sini membentuk suku namanya suku lamahala. Kemudian suku tarrong. Tarong juga di bagian barat lamahala. Bagian barat lamahala. Ini suku tarong. Itu juga mereka berdagang juga. Datang akhirnya membentuk suatu suku. Semua sama.</i></p>	<p>'Because they came to trade, bringing gold and later spreading religion, they were known as pampang juk, which means 'religious teacher.' They were from the Lamahala tribe. They formed a community centered around trade, exchanging gold for food and other goods.'</p> <p>Eventually, they settled here and formed a tribe called the Lamahala tribe. Then came the Tarrong tribe, located in the western part of Lamahala. Like the Lamahala, the Tarrong tribe also engaged in trade. They arrived and eventually formed their tribe. They were all equal.</p>

*Recording source:

<https://dataverse.nl/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.34894/APQDTX>

The educational facilities catering to the minority Muslim population in Alor are commendably equipped. Among them are madrasas and Muhammadiyah schools, providing avenues for Islamic education within the region. In the urban center of Kalabahi, a vibrant expression of Muslim identity is observed, with many residents adorning traditional Islamic attire such as the peci (traditional cap for men) and hijab (headscarf for women). This cultural manifestation underscores the local populace's strong presence and adherence to Islamic customs. Moreover, the

resonating call to prayer, known as the adzan, echoes across the city, marking the devout observance of daily prayers among Muslims in Alor. These educational and cultural aspects reflect Alor's religious inclusivity and diversity and signify the community's commitment to preserving and nurturing its Islamic heritage amidst a multi-faith landscape.

In the eastern region of Alor, harmony characterizes the relationship between the minority Muslim community and the predominant local population, reflecting a tranquil atmosphere devoid of strife. Nevertheless, tensions arise in the western area, particularly in West Pantar, where discord persists. Within the village of Benag Onong, conflicts occasionally erupt as mountain-dwelling residents sporadically target their coastal counterparts. This longstanding tension has prompted a desire among the residents for governmental facilities in the coastal regions. Efforts towards reconciliation are underway among the Alor people through dialogues and discussions to foster peace and understanding in the community.

Historically recognized as a region fraught with conflict, Alor is often accompanied by cautionary advice for potential visitors. Its reputation extends beyond physical disputes to encompass a rich tapestry of mystical beliefs and magical practices. Tales of flying individuals and mysterious occurrences lend an air of enchantment to the island's folklore, captivating the imagination of locals and outsiders alike. Moreover, woven into the fabric of Alor's mythology are legends that trace the origins of various landmarks, providing a glimpse into the ancestral heritage of its inhabitants. These narratives serve as captivating stories and offer insights into the cultural identity and historical consciousness of the Alor people, enriching the tapestry of their collective memory.

In the subsequent section, the narrative delves into the ancestral history of the Alor people, drawing heavily from oral accounts passed down through generations. Within Alor's cultural tapestry, there exists a unique perspective on the origins of their forebears, setting them apart from neighboring Lamaholot communities. While some Lamaholot groups perceive their ancestors as emerging from the depths of the earth, the Alor community possesses a distinct clarity regarding their ancestral origins, pinpointing precise geographical locations that hold significance in their lore. This nuanced understanding reflects the intricate relationship between the Alor people and their landscape, intertwining myth and geography to forge a narrative that resonates deeply with their identity. Through the lens of oral history, the Alor community's ancestral saga unfolds, offering insights into their rich cultural heritage and the enduring connection to their roots embedded within their existence.

History of the Ancestors of the Alorese People

According to the residents of Alor, oral history represents a situated history based on collective memory. It is regarded as a valuable source for historical understanding if adequately corroborated, as emphasized by prominent historians such as Vansina and Stone. In the context of Alor, this notion holds particular significance, given the scarcity of alternative historical evidence for reconstruction purposes. Without written records or archaeological findings, the oral traditions passed down through generations serve as the region's primary repository of historical knowledge. These oral accounts provide insights into the past and reflect the cultural identity and worldview of the Alor community. As custodians of their history, the people of Alor place great importance on preserving and transmitting these oral narratives to future generations, recognizing their role in shaping collective identity and understanding of the past. Thus, oral history is vital to Alor's cultural heritage, offering a unique lens through which to interpret its rich and diverse history.

The oral history data utilized in this paper are of two types: oral interview recordings and written data. The oral interview recordings consist of the audio captured during interviews, which provide firsthand accounts and personal insights pertinent to the research. On the other hand, the written data encompass various documented materials ranging from interview transcripts, related historical documents, personal diaries, letters, or any other written sources relevant to the study. These two forms of data collectively contribute to the depth and richness of the research findings presented in the paper.

Interpreting data is a crucial process that involves several important steps to ensure accuracy and reliability. The first step is transcribing the data, which involves converting information from its original form into a written or digital format. This transcription stage is essential for ensuring that all details are captured correctly for further analysis. The next step is reading the data carefully, where the interpreter examines the transcribed information thoroughly to understand its context and meaning. The interpreter can uncover valuable insights and patterns by paying close attention to the details and nuances within the data. Finally, organizing the data chronologically is a key aspect of the interpretation process. This step involves arranging the information in a sequential order based on time or events, which can provide a clearer understanding of the data and help identify trends or correlations. By following these steps diligently, interpreters can effectively analyze and derive meaningful conclusions from the data at hand. Table 3 below illustrates how the Alorese people present their ancestral history through oral tradition.

Table 3
An example of Alorese Oral Tradition

Identifier*	Interview	English translation
AOLYS_Wailaw ar_2018_05_21 _Cultural Questionnaire_S almon_Illu-01	<i>Awalnya dia sudah ada di sini. Perjalanan itu sesudah air bah. Tempat kosong dia mulai, ternyata dapat bayi. Sebelum air bah, Mau Lelang Dohi sudah ada di sini. Sesudah air bah dulu dia kunjung perjalann itu baru dia ketemu bayi ini. Air bah dia selamat. Tempatnya ada. Kalau kita. Kita pun bisa lihat bukti tempat selamatkan diri.</i>	'Initially, he (a prince) was already here. The journey began after the great flood. In an empty place, he started his journey and eventually found a baby. Before the flood, Mau Lelang Dohi was already here. After the flood, he continued his journey and found this baby. He survived the flood. The place is still there, and even now, we can see the evidence of where he saved himself.'

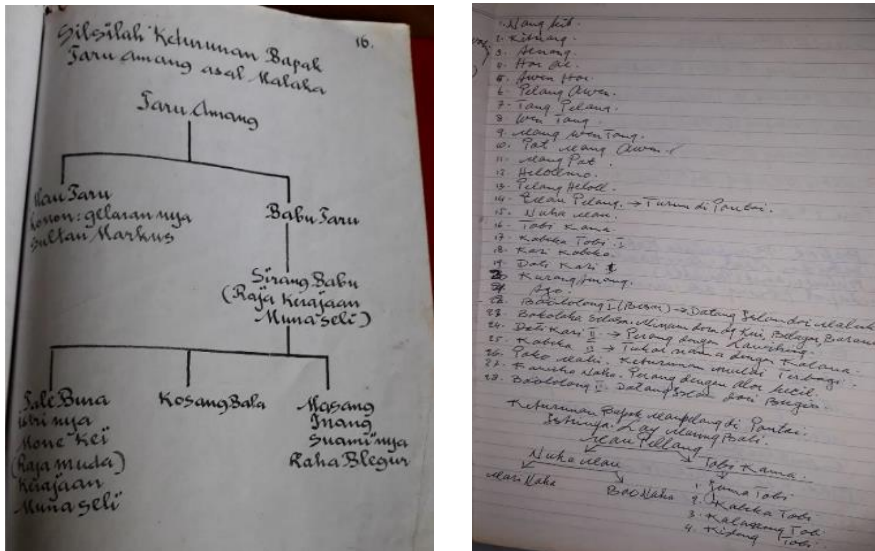
*Recording source:

<https://dataverse.nl/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.34894/APQDTX>

The Alor people's historical narrative unfolds with the onset of a catastrophic occurrence: a devastating flash flood that swept through the Rusa Island area, nestled in the strait between Pantar Island and Lembata. As the deluge subsided, survivors sought refuge, finding solace and safety on the shores of Pantar. Among the myriad stories of survival and resilience that emerged from this catastrophe, one particular legend has endured in the collective memory of the Alor people. In the village of Helangdohi, nestled amidst Pantar's verdant landscape, a tale persists of two infants miraculously spared from the wrath of the floodwaters—a narrative immortalized in the annals of local lore and passed down through generations. Rode Meier, in documenting the oral traditions of the Alor community, captures the essence of this legend, illuminating its significance in shaping the cultural fabric of Pantar. Across the island, from bustling townships to remote hamlets, the tale of these resilient infants reverberates, underscoring the indomitable spirit of the Alor people. Moreover, Helangdohi emerges as a bastion of resilience and cultural heritage, revered by the Alor community for its enduring traditions and storied past. Thus, amidst the ebb and flow of time, the legacy of Deer Island's flood endures as a testament to the resilience, unity, and unwavering spirit of the Alor people.

Following this scheme, it is found that there is a narrative detailing outsiders' arrival in Alor, with locals attributing their origins to Java. However, scholars like Klamer and other anonymous sources suggest that their origins need not be limited to Java solitary, as they could have hailed from any surrounding islands. This notion is reinforced by linguistic kinship studies, which reveal connections between languages such as Lamaholot and Kedang with Alorese. The fascination with claiming Javanese descent among the Alor people stems partly from the historical association with the Majapahit kingdom. This connection instills a sense of pride, as being linked to a prestigious empire like Majapahit holds significant cultural significance.

Figure 3
The Family Lineage of the Ancestors of the Alorese People for 28 Generations



The association with Javanese people persists among several tribes in Alor. In Pandai Village, for instance, there are the Dingalaeng, Laduboleng, and Kawiane tribes, each comprising smaller sub-tribes like Uma Au, Uma Kabagoe, Uma Lakaduli, Uma Luwo, and Uma Wai Boho. Similarly, in Baranusa Village, the Uma Kakang, Uma Aring, and Maluku tribes are present, each with its distinct historical background. In addition to the association with Javanese people, there is also a connection with Malays. Historical records indicate a conflict between the Javanese in Pandai and the Malays in Munaseli, resulting in Munaseli's defeat. Subsequently, the defeated Malays sought refuge in Alor, solidifying a historical tie between the region and Malay culture.

In Alor, there exists a compelling narrative concerning refugees from Pantar who forged marital bonds with indigenous mountain dwellers in Adang, forming a significant historical cornerstone. This intermarriage served as the genesis of the Alor community settled along the Alor Peninsula. Over time, these unions gave rise to three distinct villages, each bearing a unique cultural heritage and societal dynamics. According to Welfelt's 2016 research, these three villages are tangible manifestations of the amalgamation between immigrant Alor settlers and the indigenous mountain populace of Adang. Delving deeper into their lineage unveils a rich tapestry of ancestral connections that trace back an impressive twenty-eight generations. Through these interwoven familial ties, the Alor people have preserved their heritage and cultivated a profound sense of belonging rooted in their shared history and collective identity.

In the subsequent section, we delve into the intricate dynamics between Alor's Muslim population and the interior's inhabitants. Historical narratives have frequently depicted their relationship as fraught with tension and apprehension, implying a sense of perpetual unease. However, upon closer examination and observations, it becomes evident that these communities can coexist harmoniously. While sporadic instances have highlighted underlying tensions, the prevailing atmosphere suggests a potential for peaceful cohabitation and mutual understanding between these diverse groups. This nuanced interplay between the Muslim Alor community and their inland counterparts reflects a complex sociocultural landscape shaped by historical interactions, contemporary realities, and evolving perceptions.

The Correlation between the Coastal Alorese and the Interior Population of Alor

The indigenous communities inhabiting the interior regions of Alor have established their presence in this area for over 3000 years, tracing back to ancient times. Their linguistic heritage is rooted in Papuan languages, distinct from the Austronesian languages spoken by the coastal populations. These indigenous groups have cultivated a lifestyle centered around subsistence activities such as hunting, gathering, and agriculture, sustaining themselves through a deep connection to the land and its resources. In contrast to the relatively uniform dialect of the Alor language, the languages spoken by the inland communities exhibit remarkable diversity, reflecting the intricate social structures and historical interactions within these groups. This linguistic variation underscores the complexity and richness of the indigenous cultures thriving in the interior of Alor.

Despite the linguistic and cultural distinctions, both the coastal and inland communities contribute to the vibrant tapestry of Alor's heritage, each preserving and transmitting their unique traditions across generations. Through their resilient livelihood practices and profound connection to their ancestral lands, Alor's Indigenous peoples continue to shape this region's identity and character, embodying a profound legacy of resilience and cultural diversity. Table 4 taken from an interview source, illustrates the relationship between the Alorese coastal Muslim communities and the inland non-Muslim communities.

Table 4

The Relationship Between the Alorese Coastal Muslim Communities and the Inland Non-Muslim Communities

Identifier*	Interview	English translation
AOLYS_Ban a_2018_05_ 19_Cultural _Questionair e_Aruji_Abd ullah_&_Ba hrudin-01	<i>Ada baku hina akhirnya ada perang. Yang menang itu dari Pandai. Memang dorang punya bola anyaman, tapi karena yang kepala perang ini dia langsung ke munaseli langsung ambil mereka punya kepala perang punya kepala sehingga pandai menang.</i>	‘There was a conflict of verbal insults that eventually led to war. The Pandai side won. Although they had woven balls, it was because their war leader went directly to Munaseli and took the head of the enemy's war leader that Pandai emerged victorious.’

*Recording source:

<https://dataverse.nl/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.34894/APQDTX>

The table above illustrates wars in the past, but most narrators testified that today, all is peaceful, especially in the eastern part, but not in the western part. Coexistence prevails in the eastern regions, where cultural and linguistic diversity is more pronounced. In the city of Kalabahi, which serves as a hub for commerce and social interaction, Alor people engage in various economic activities, including selling their products. This economic exchange fosters interaction and understanding between different linguistic and cultural groups. Moreover, Muslim Alor individuals in Atimelang selling souvenirs reflect the integration and adaptation of diverse communities within the local economy.

Despite occasional tensions, particularly in the western areas, these instances of peaceful coexistence highlight the resilience and adaptability of Alor's linguistic and cultural landscape. In the Western part, however, things can escalate quite abruptly.

Table 5 shows stories from the western part of Pantar, where inter-ethnic conflicts are more likely to occur.

Table 5

The Relationship Between the Alorese Coastal Muslim Communities and the Inland Non-Muslim Communities in the Western Alor-Pantar Region

Identifier*	Interview	English translation
AOLYS_Beang_0 nong_2018_07_1 6_Cultural_Quest ionaire -01	<i>Dorang tidak suka perkembangan di bawah dorang lempar batu.</i>	'They did not like the changes happening below (near the coast), so they threw stones.'

*Recording source:

<https://dataverse.nl/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.34894/APQDTX>

In the village of Beang Onong, a socio-economic conflict emerged between the highland and coastal communities. This conflict is rooted in differing access to newly introduced infrastructural developments, such as health facilities and schools, primarily established in coastal areas. These developments represented a shift in the local socio-economic landscape, favoring the coastal community due to their geographic proximity to these resources. Feeling excluded from these benefits, the mountain community responded with resistance, stemming from a perceived imbalance in resource distribution. Their discontent grew as they sought to leverage these new facilities to their advantage despite their location in the coastal area. As a result, the mountain community attempted to pressure the coastal inhabitants to relinquish their land, potentially indicating deeper issues of land ownership, territorial rights, and equitable access to resources.

In the Pantar Strait region, the relationship between Alor language speakers and indigenous people has been running smoothly for generations. This harmonious coexistence is demonstrated through various customary alliances that have been formed over time. One such alliance is the 7-3-10 alliance, which involves coordination and cooperation among seven villages for various communal activities and events. Similarly, the Galiyao Watang Lema alliance, named after the term "Galiyao," as described by Holton, signifies unity and collaboration among local communities. These alliances serve as pillars of support and cooperation, fostering social cohesion and mutual understanding among different ethnic groups in the region. Despite occasional tensions that may arise, the overarching spirit of camaraderie and friendship prevails, highlighting the resilience and adaptability of

these communities in maintaining peaceful relations amidst cultural diversity (Gomang, 2006).

In Alor, myriad cultural events underscore the tight-knit bonds among its inhabitants, with one prominent tradition being the "makan baru" ceremony. This tradition, observed annually in June or July, is a communal gathering where locals celebrate and strengthen social ties. Beyond the "makan baru," the village of Alor Besar hosts various events that draw guests from neighboring communities. One such occasion involves discussions revolving around family heritage land, a topic of great significance among the villagers. These discussions typically occur at the esteemed Pusung Rebung house, a central location where elders and community leaders convene to deliberate on ancestral heritage and communal welfare matters. Such events foster a sense of unity and belonging and highlight the rich cultural tapestry that defines life in Alor.

Interactions between the coastal Alor people and those dwelling in the mountainous regions have transpired for centuries, fostering various forms of contact and exchange. Marriages between individuals from coastal and mountain communities have served to solidify relationships and forge bonds between these distinct groups. Additionally, trade has been pivotal in facilitating interactions, with goods and commodities exchanged between coastal settlements and mountainous villages, contributing to economic interdependence and cultural exchange. Furthermore, linguistic interactions have occurred, leading to the sharing and adaptation of language elements between coastal and mountain dialects, enriching both linguistic traditions and fostering mutual understanding among the diverse communities of Alor. These multifaceted interactions reflect Alor's dynamic and interconnected cultural landscape, where diverse communities coexist and engage in meaningful exchanges across geographical and social boundaries.

Marriages between the Alor people residing along the coast and those inhabiting the mountainous regions have been a longstanding tradition deeply embedded in the region's cultural fabric. The practice of intermarriage, known locally as "kawin mawin," has endured through generations, symbolizing the union of individuals and the integration of diverse communities within Alor. Historically, the Alor language was pivotal as a lingua franca, facilitating communication among people from different linguistic backgrounds. This linguistic exchange facilitated trade and social interactions and served as a means of cultural exchange, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation. In these marital unions, both parties are expected to adapt and learn each other's languages and customs, enriching cultural diversity in Alor. Thus, the intertwining of marriage and language reflects the

interconnectedness and harmony between coastal and mountain communities, shaping the social dynamics and identity of the Alor people over centuries.

The hypothesis regarding the morphological simplification of the Alor language, proposed by Klamer, has sparked significant interest among linguists and researchers. This hypothesis suggests that over time, the structure and complexity of the Alor language have changed, leading to a simplification of its morphology. Moro's research further delves into this hypothesis, providing valuable insights into the potential mechanisms driving this linguistic evolution. One potential scenario explored by Moro involves the process of second language acquisition among individuals from mountainous regions. As these individuals learn Alor as a second language, they may unintentionally simplify its grammar and morphology to facilitate their understanding and communication. This phenomenon reflects the intricate interplay between language contact, language acquisition, and linguistic change in multilingual societies like Alor. Moreover, the morphological simplification of the Alor language underscores the dynamic nature of language evolution, where languages adapt to meet the communication needs of diverse communities while retaining their essential linguistic identity. Further research and analysis are needed to fully understand the complexities of this linguistic phenomenon and its implications for the Alor community's language dynamics and sociocultural interactions.

Loanwords between the Alor and mountain languages reflect the interaction between these two communities. The number of loanwords is relatively small, indicating limited but significant linguistic exchange between the two groups. Interestingly, some loanwords exhibit diverse semantic fields, suggesting a nuanced interplay between the Alor and mountain languages. These loanwords often acquire meanings that resonate with both linguistic traditions, serving as bridges facilitating communication and cultural exchange. Such loanwords underscore the historical and cultural ties between the Alor coastal communities and the mountain dwellers, highlighting the complexity of language contact and adaptation in multicultural settings like Alor. Further exploration of these loanwords and their semantic evolution can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of linguistic interaction and cultural integration in the region.

Legends and Myths in the Alor Community

Within the Alor community, legends and myths play a significant role in shaping cultural beliefs and practices. These myths often revolve around supernatural beings and phenomena, intertwining with ancestral rituals and traditions. Mythical

creatures and spirits are central figures in Alor's folklore, influencing the spiritual and social fabric of the community. Rituals and ceremonies associated with these beliefs serve as a means of connecting with ancestral spirits and seeking their guidance and protection. Additionally, numerous legends explain the origins of certain places or ancestral lineages, providing a narrative framework through which the community understands its history and identity. These legends serve as a source of cultural pride and a means of transmitting knowledge and values from generation to generation, fostering a sense of continuity and belonging within the Alor society.

In the Alor Peninsula, a legend exists regarding the formation of Alor Island itself. According to this myth, long ago, the entire region of Alor was submerged underwater, leaving only one village at the tip of the Alor Peninsula. After the waters receded, the land of Alor emerged from the sea, revealing the village which now stands as the oldest and most revered in the Alor Peninsula. This village holds significant cultural and historical importance for the peninsula's inhabitants and the Alor people residing along the coast. The legend serves as a symbolic representation of the resilience and endurance of the Alor community and their deep connection with their homeland and its natural surroundings. It reinforces the pride and reverence that the Alor people hold for their ancestral heritage and the land they inhabit, shaping their collective identity and cultural practices.

In the Pantar Strait, there is a legend about a great flood. According to the legend, Alor Island and Pantar Island were connected as one landmass in the past. However, after a great flood, this landmass separated, and small islands emerged around it. This legend reflects the oral tradition of the local communities and how they explain geographical features through storytelling, preserving cultural heritage, and understanding natural phenomena. Legends like these often carry symbolic meanings and explain significant events in the history and formation of the islands, providing insights into the cultural and environmental context of the region.

Table 5
Legend of Two Islands Were Once Connected by Landt to The Pantar Mainland

Identifier*	Interview	English translation
AOLYS_Beang_0 nong_2018_07_1 6_Cultural_Quest ionaire -01	<i>Pulau rusa itu lama sudah. Itu cerita itu dorang omong orang omong. Raja alor itu, itu dorang punya kampung di sana.</i>	'Rusa Island has existed for a long time. It is a story that has been passed down orally. The king of Alor, Ahmad Nampira, and his village

<p><i>Ahmad Nampira. Dorang punya kampung di Pulau rusa. Waktu tenggelam itu dorang lari. Dorang punya rumah itu hanyut. Di Pantar Barat sana. Terhampar di Wolu. Orang tinggal di situ, 1 bulan, keraadan tidak bagus, jadi jalan. Dorang punya kakak, ko adik tetap tinggal, pergi tinggal di alor. Baru jadi raja, dia balik. Dia punya adik akak ada di Pantar barat. Itu dari pulau rusa punya. Dulu kan tanah masih sambung. Sekarang air bah itu jadi pulau Pulau dua itu sambung.</i></p>	<p>were located there on Rusa Island. When the island began to sink, they fled, and their homes were washed away, eventually ending up scattered across West Pantar in Wolu. The people stayed there for a month, but due to poor conditions, they moved on. Some of their siblings remained behind, while others went to live in Alor. Later, after becoming king, he returned. His siblings still lived in West Pantar, maintaining a connection to Rusa Island. The land was still connected in the past, but after a great flood, it separated into two islands.'</p>
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*Recording source:

<https://dataverse.nl/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.34894/APQDTX>

In the village of Munaseli, there is a legend about the arrival of their ancestors using a boat, which has now turned into stone. Along the coast near the village of Munaseli is a large coral rock formation resembling a boat. Local inhabitants believe their ancestors used this boat to travel from Melayu to Pantar. Legends like this often blend historical events with mythical elements, providing a narrative framework through which communities understand their origins and cultural heritage. The belief in ancestral migration by sea reflects the importance of maritime traditions and the interconnectedness of different cultures in the region. Additionally, these legends reinforce communal identity and pride, as they emphasize the resilience and resourcefulness of past generations in navigating the challenges of their environment.

In Lapang Batang, there is a legend about a catastrophic flood that caused the displacement of people from Lapang Batang to Pantar and Lembata. The Lamaholot people still believe this story in Flores and Lembata, who maintain that some of their

ancestors originated from Lapang Batang. Furthermore, some memorable songs and poems are still sung today by Larantuka, East Flores residents. These songs encompass verses that narrate ancestors' migration following the flood disaster. These verses are even found in Larantuka and the Tanjung Bunga district in East Flores. Legends like this often serve as cultural markers, preserving historical events while instilling a sense of collective memory and identity within communities. The persistence of these songs and poems underscores the enduring significance of ancestral narratives in shaping cultural heritage and societal cohesion across generations.

D. Conclusion

This paper extensively explores the Alor community within the broader context of the Alor Regency. It comprehensively analyzes their status as a minority, historical lineage, intricate social dynamics, and the rich tapestry of myths and legends woven into their cultural fabric. Meticulous examination unveils the multifaceted nature of the Alor people's existence, shedding light on their historical journey from ancient origins to contemporary realities.

Central to the discourse is the portrayal of the Alor community as a minority group within the Alor Regency, navigating the complexities of societal structures dominated by majority populations. Despite their numerical minority status, the Alor people have carved out a distinct niche within the region, preserving their unique cultural identity while engaging with broader societal norms and practices. This dichotomy is explored in depth, revealing the resilience and adaptability of the Alor community in navigating the intricate sociocultural landscape they inhabit.

A significant portion of the paper is dedicated to unraveling the historical roots of the Alor people, tracing their ancestry through oral traditions, historical records, and archaeological findings. By delving into the depths of their past, the study illuminates the diverse influences that have shaped Alor society over millennia, from ancient migrations and interethnic interactions to colonial encounters and modern developments. The paper paints a vivid portrait of the Alor people's journey through this historical lens, capturing the essence of their identity and heritage.

Furthermore, the paper meticulously examines the intricate social dynamics within the Alor community, particularly the relationships between coastal and interior residents. It explores the nuances of these interactions, ranging from intermarriages and trade relations to linguistic exchanges and occasional conflicts. By dissecting these complex dynamics, the study offers valuable insights into the

mechanisms that govern social cohesion and cultural continuity within the Alor community.

A central theme of the paper is the exploration of myths and legends embedded within Alor culture, providing a window into the collective consciousness and worldview of the Alor people. These myths and legends serve not only as repositories of cultural memory but also as narratives that shape the Alor community's understanding of their origins, ancestry, and place in the world. Through a nuanced analysis of these narratives, the paper unveils the symbolic significance and cultural resonance of mythological motifs within Alor society.

In conclusion, this paper presents a holistic portrait of the Alor community, offering a nuanced understanding of their historical, social, and cultural dimensions. By illuminating the complexities of Alor society, the study contributes to a deeper appreciation of the diverse tapestry of cultures that enrich the Alor region. Moreover, it underscores the resilience, adaptability, and cultural vibrancy of the Alor people, highlighting their enduring contributions to the cultural mosaic of Indonesia. Moving forward, further research and exploration into the intricacies of Alor society are essential for fostering greater understanding, respect, and appreciation for their unique heritage and legacy.

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