

*Papuan-Austronesian Language Contact in Alor Pantar:  
Alorese Grammar in Areal Perspective*

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This paper focusses on the role of language contact in the development of the grammar of Alorese (*Bahasa Alor*; Klamer forthcoming). Surrounded by Non-Austronesian languages, Alorese is the only indigenous Austronesian language spoken on the islands of Alor and Pantar in eastern Indonesia.

As a case study of language contact between Papuan and Austronesian languages, the paper focuses on those morphological and syntactic features of Alorese that diverge from proto (Central) Malayo Polynesian grammatical features, that is, could not have been inherited. The hypothesis is that these features are not independent developments, but diffused from Non-Austronesian languages. An obvious scenario would be that diffusion took place through contact between Alorese and its present-day Non-Austronesian neighbours on Alor and Pantar. This is the view expressed in Klamer (2007).

In the first section of the paper I test that scenario. I compare the non-p(C)MP features of Alorese with its closest geneological relative, Lamaholot (Nishiyama & Kelen 2007). Surprisingly, it turns out that many of these features are also found in Lamaholot. Local oral history of Alorese speakers reports that their ancestors migrated from east Java to east Flores, and then on to Pantar and Alor during the time of the Majapahit kingdom; i.e., roughly between 1300-1500 AD. To what extent the Javanese connection is historical is unknown -- there is no lexical or grammatical evidence for it in today's Alorese. There is, however, no doubt that Alorese is closely related to the Lamaholot dialects spoken on Flores. I assume that the ancestors of the Alorese speakers migrated eastward in historical times: from Flores to Pantar and on to Alor (and not the other way around).

There is no historical evidence that Lamaholot has been in contact with Non-Austronesian speakers. So if the non-PMP features in Lamaholot indeed reflect a Non-Austronesian substrate, then the Non-Austronesian contact must have taken place in prehistory, and long before the Alorese migrated eastward to Pantar and Alor. For the Alorese this implies that many of its non-PMP features are not due to recent contact with present-day non-AN neighbours, as they were already part of the ancestor language spoken on Flores, and of more ancient date.

The second section of the paper focusses on those non-PMP features that are different in Alorese and Lamaholot. The major differences we find in the morphological domain: Alorese underwent a massive loss of inflectional and derivational morphology since it moved away from Flores. This may have been caused by imperfect L2 learning of Alorese which was used as a trade language on the coastal parts of Pantar and Alor. Apart from the loss of morphology, we also find slight word order differences in the VP and NP and a few Non-Austronesian lexical borrowings. The general lack of lexical and

grammatical borrowing suggests that the contact between Alorese and speakers of NAN languages of Alor-Pantar must have been of limited intensity. It definitely did not involve any language shift.

In the third section, I compare the features of Alorese with the features of Teiwa (Klamer 2010), one of the non-Austronesian languages spoken on Pantar that it is (has been) in contact with. The assumption is that any feature shared between Alorese and Teiwa, and not with Lamaholot, can be argued to result from contact between Alorese and Teiwa (or a non-Austronesian language like it). The fact that Teiwa is morphologically largely isolating is important, as this must have played a role when Alorese was learned imperfectly by Teiwa second language learners.

We conclude that Alorese is a layered language with at least three distinct historical layers: (i) an original Austronesian (PMP) layer, (ii) a prehistorical non-Austronesian layer of unclear origin shared with Lamaholot, and (iii) a historical non-Austronesian layer that is the result of its recent function as trade language of non-Austronesian speakers like the Teiwa.

#### *Selected references*

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