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Historyscapes in Alor

Approaching indigenous histories in eastern Indonesia

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1. INTRODUCTION

Alor is an Indonesian island located at the eastern terminus of the Lesser Sunda Islands, bordering East Timor to the southeast. The Alor archipelago or district (*kecamatan*) consists of 17 islands, of which Alor Island is the largest: in its east-west orientation Alor is 107 kilometres long, in the north-south direction it is about 80 kilometres deep (see map below).[1]
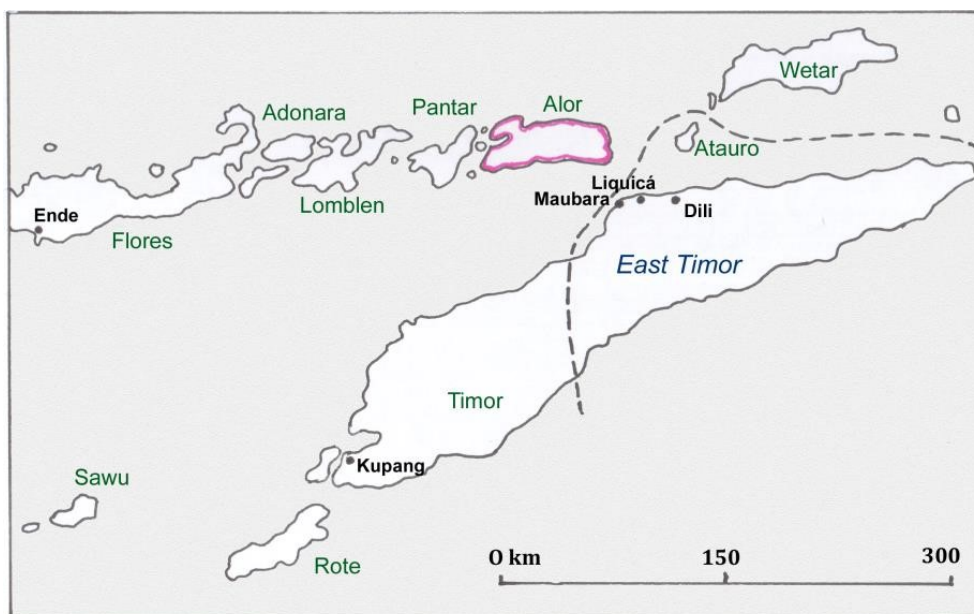
Ill 1. Alor and surrounding islands. Map: Lennart Hildingsson

This thesis is concerned with Alor Island, its peoples and their pasts. Specifically the interest lies in how peoples in Alor distinguish and represent their own histories. As will become evident, place is important in that context.

On a map, Alor consists of the main 'body' of Alor, to which the Bird´s Head peninsula is connected by a low-lying isthmus. To people living in Alor

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[1] Direktori Pulau-Pulau Kecil Indonesia, http://www.ppk-kp3k.kkp.go.id/direktori-pulau/index.php/public_c/pulau_info/327 (accessed on 18-06-2016).

these distinctive parts, the peninsula and the mainland, are commonly perceived as two separate mountains or islands. This understanding of the geography is based on a perspective from the ground, rather than on the bird's eye view that follows with the practice of using maps.
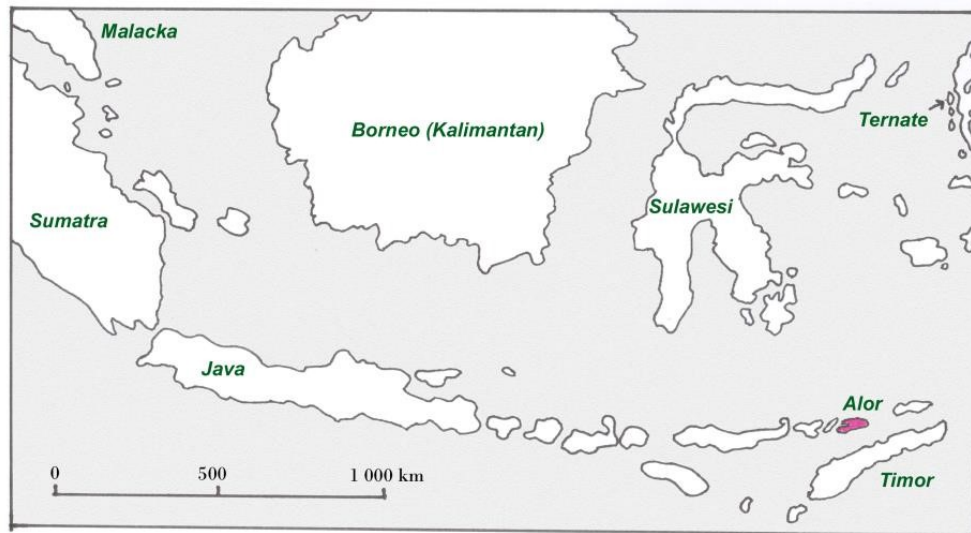
Ill 2. Alor is situated in the south-east corner of Indonesia, close to the neighbouring country of East Timor. Map: Lennart Hildingsson

Geologically the Bird´s Head and the mainland differ: the Bird´s Head peninsula is characterized by terraces of uplifted coral reefs and at its highest points the peninsula reaches about 850 metres above sea level. Meanwhile the mainland has volcanic activity but no active volcano. The highest peaks are Mount Koya-Koya (1765 metres) in East Alor and Mount Muna (1440 metres) in the southwest. Both are old volcanoes.[2]

From a European perspective, Alor has a colonial past as the island was situated within the sphere of interest of the Portuguese and later the Dutch from the 16th century onwards. When the borders between the colonial powers began to be settled in the mid-19th century Alor became part of the Dutch East Indies – though a peripheral, unprofitable and untamed part of the colonial realm. Neither people nor geography had the good taste of complying with orderly manners. A Dutch report from 1946 includes the following description of Alor geography:

> *The entire island is extraordinarily heavily accidental in form. A certain systematic-ness in the appearance of the mountains cannot be denied, but the ridges, summits and ravines with mostly quite*

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[2] Klamer, 2010, p.4; Hantoro et al. 1994.

steep sides lie helter-skelter through each other, and the whole thing gives a very confused impression.[3]

Still from the European perspective, the people living in Alor were from the 16th century onwards depicted as head-hunters or cannibals – or at the very least as uncivilized.[4] Such epithets have clung to parts of the population into the present, especially when referring to people in the interiors of the mainland.

Expressed in statistics, in 1946 the population in Alor Island was reported to be 88,000. By 2010 the population had increased to 165,000.[5] Due to urbanization the distribution of population was uneven. Kalabahi, district capital founded around 1912, is located in the Bird´s Head peninsula, facing Kalabahi bay. The sub-district of Teluk Mutiara (Pearl Bay), roughly equating to greater Kalabahi, had in 2010 a population density of 630 persons per km2, while in the sub-district Alor Timur (East Alor) the population only came to 12 persons per km2.[6] Most people on the island have connections and a place to stay in town, even if they live in a rural area.

The province of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), of which Alor is part, is one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia. Based on figures from 2011 the district statistics office in Alor estimated 20,279 households in Alor Island as being 'impecunious', meaning below the poverty level.[7] In rural areas people depend on agriculture, gathering forest products and to some extent hunting. The staple crops are maize, edible tubers, and rice. Some cash crops are grown but a subsistence economy dominates. In coastal areas fish and other sea products play an important part in local economy. These two subsistence niches; i) interior, land oriented and ii) coastal, sea oriented, constitute a salient theme in indigenous lives and histories.

A small number of tourists visit Alor, mainly for diving or deep sea fishing. The first embryo of tourism dates back to the 1930s when cruise ships brought American visitors, who according to the abovementioned colonial report came 'to watch the "wild and woolly people" of Alor'.[8] At that time Alor was considered to be among the places in the world least affected by Western culture.[9]

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[3] Hägerdal, 2010a, p. 36.

[4] Barnes 1993; Hägerdal, 2010b.

[5] Hägerdal 2010a, p. 36; Badan Pusat Statistik, Kabupaten Alor, https://alorkab.bps.go.id/linkTabelStatis/view/id/8, (accessed on 10-07-2016).

[6] Direktori Pulau-Pulau Kecil Indonesia, http://www.ppk-kp3k.kkp.go.id/direktori-pulau/index.php/public_c/pulau_info/327 (accessed on 18-06-2016).

[7] Badan Pusat Statistik, Kabupaten Alor, http://alorkab.bps.go.id/linkTabelStatis/view/id/18 (accessed on 18-06-2016).

[8] Hägerdal, 2011, p. 55.

[9] This was a contributing factor when the American anthropologist Cora Du Bois decided on a location for her research, partly aiming to test the applicability of psychoanalytical methods and concepts in a non-Western setting (Du Bois, 1944; Wellfelt, 2013).

With about 88% of the population in Indonesia defining themselves as Muslims, Indonesia is by population the largest Muslim country in the world.[10] In Alor this balance is reversed. Statistics from 2008 give the following distribution of religious adherence: Protestants: 136,236 (72%); Muslims: 43,556 (23%); Catholics: 6,895 (3.5%); Hindu: 151.[11] These figures conceal historical developments over centuries.

The shift from indigenous beliefs to scriptural world religions began early but did not accelerate until after independence in 1949. The introduction of Islam is mainly associated with the rule of Sultan Babullah in Ternate (1570-1583). The religion was concentrated in the Bird′s Head and West Alor. The Protestant mission in Alor began in the early 20th century and was closely associated with developing the colonial administration in the island. Christianity has since become the majority religion, though its adherents are increasingly divided between different churches. Meanwhile the Catholic Church which had been present in Solor and Timor from the 16th century did not establish itself in Alor until after World War II.[12]

About 20 different native languages are spoken in Alor. Most people also master the national language Indonesian (or the local Alor Malay version). One language, Alorese, is an Austronesian language, while the others are Papuan, belonging to a subgroup that through recent research has been classified as 'Timor-Alor-Pantar languages'.[13] This linguistic diversity reflects multifaceted historical developments.

Approaching historical sources

One problem when engaging in history in a colonial context, and as in the Alor case with groups that were perceived by the colonial power as exceptionally uncivilized, is the persistence of stereotypes and the biased judgements that come across in archival sources.

In places with a colonial past or present, archival sources are coloured by historical encounters that Mary Louise Pratt labelled the 'contact zone'. Pratt defined this as 'the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict'. [14] The documents in the colonial archive were produced in this space, which, as Pratt also points out, was a

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[10] Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2009
https://web.archive.org/web/20091010050756/http://pewforum.org/newassets/images/reports/Muslimp opulation/Muslimpopulation.pdf (accessed on 16-07-2016).
[11] Direktori Pulau-Pulau Kecil Indonesia, http://www.ppk-kp3k.kkp.go.id/direktori-pulau/index.php/public_c/pulau_info/327 (accessed on 18-06-2016).
[12] Aritonang & Steenbrink (eds.), 2008, p. 73-97; p. 237-244.
[13] Schapper & Huber, 2012. In the following 'Alorese' refers to the language and its speakers, not to people inhabiting the island of Alor.
[14] Pratt, 2010[1992], p. 8.

place of interaction and interlocking understandings and practices, but often these interactions were framed by radically asymmetrical relations of power.[15]

The 1946 report quoted above is an example, containing as it does highly interesting data about Alor, including historical notes. It is also an exposé of judgemental assessments, more revealing of ideals in the colonial administration than of the places and peoples described. The *controleur* behind the report found that the people in the Bird´s Head peninsula were less primitive than in other parts of Alor. This was due to proximity and interaction with the Kalabahi post. Appearance and language were important indicators when estimating relative primitiveness. The more civilized population in the Bird´s Head peninsula wore Malay style sarongs. Those well off had shirts, with the young generation dressing up in white shirts – like Europeans in the tropics. The *controleur* noted that thanks to access to schools most people in the Bird´s Head spoke Malay, which was the lingua franca of the Dutch East Indies. The ability to communicate might have contributed to the *controleur's* expressed opinion about the intelligence of the Bird´s Head population: '…they are not stupid'. The Bird´s Head was contrasted to other parts of Alor where both men and women were dressed according to local style, wearing more revealing loincloths. The *controleur* found that: 'The population in the rest of Alor, especially in the *landschap* Kui and the communities Welai and Limbur, are still utterly primitive'.[16]

If you are interested in the history of such 'utterly primitive' people as those living in places like Welai and Limbur, how useful is the colonial archive? The problem of biased sources is not a new one; the most well-known discussion of the issue specifically relating to the Dutch archives covering Indonesia is probably Ann Laura Stoler's *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*.[17] Stoler is interested in power relations, but instead of reading against the grain, making subalterns into heroes, she advocates a more nuanced approach to the colonial archive. There is of course also the option of moving beyond the archive.

In his *Theaters of Memory: Past and present in contemporary culture*, historian Raphael Samuel delivered a heavy critique of History as practiced by professional historians. According to Samuel, the history discipline '…fetishizes archive-based research, as it has done ever since the Rankean revolution – or counter-revolution – in scholarship'.[18]

Samuel described a 'tribal sense of who is, and who is not a historian' where he discerned an implicit assumption of knowledge as filtering downwards. The apex of the hierarchy was academic practitioners doing research, writing papers and monographs. A selection of their findings was in a lower level presented in textbooks aimed at students. On yet a lower level

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[15] Pratt, 2010[1992], p. 8.
[16] Hägerdal, 2011, p. 55.
[17] Stoler, 2009.
[18] Samuel, 2012[1994], p. 3 .

stood enthusiastic amateurs whose ability to contribute to History was highly limited, and really of a manual nature. Meanwhile Samuel found that popular forms of history were marginal or absent in the academic world of professional historians. Samuel concluded that 'All of this involves a very hierarchical view of the constitution of knowledge, and a very restricted one'.[19]

Samuel argued for a more inclusive approach to sources, including oral traditions which he found absent in most conventional historiographies. Exceptions mentioned by Samuel in a footnote were historians working in African contexts. In Samuel's words the oral tradition – an important building stone in Alor historyscapes (see pages 15-21) – '…wells up from those lower depths – history's nether-world – where memory and myth intermingle, and the imaginary rubs shoulders with the real'.[20]

On a fundamental level, Samuel's critique was aimed at a wider understanding of history, which he defined as 'a social form of knowledge; the work, in any given instance, of a thousand different hands'.[21] With this perspective studying history was not limited to archival research, but also involved studying popular memory – which in turn 'requires a different order of evidence, and a different kind of inquiry'. Samuel suggested some tentative starting points for such studies, including autobiographies, local lore, and landscape.[22]

The inclusive approach found in Samuel's work from 1994 resonates with preceding works within the French Annales School where interdisciplinary studies of public culture, mentality, and collective memory were headed by historians like Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora. This ground-breaking research was followed by similar studies in different parts of Europe.[23] Other fields sharing Samuel's inclusive view on history and heritage developed rapidly after 1994. These include oral history and (critical) heritage studies. While oral history has to a large extent developed in Western contexts, often with non-elitist or minority perspectives, critical heritage studies builds on heritage research in a global context highlighting diverse ways of perceiving and managing heritage.[24] In Laurajane Smith's terminology critical heritage studies has challenged the 'authorized heritage discourse' (AHD) which 'privileges monumentality and grand scale, innate artefact/site significance, tied to time depth, scientific/aesthetic expert judgement, social consensus and

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[19] Samuel, 2012[1994], p. 4-5.
[20] Samuel, 2012[1994], p. 5-6.
[21] Samuel, 2012[1994], p. 8.
[22] Samuel, 2012[1994], p. 10-11.
[23] See Aronsson, 2009[2004], p. 46-47.
[24] Perks & Thompson (eds.), 2006[1998] is a good introduction to oral history. Loh, Koh & Dobbs, (eds.), 2013, specifically deals with oral history in Southeast Asia (this volume includes Wellfelt, 2013). In the Swedish context Thor & Hansson (eds.), 2015 is a recent contribution to the study of oral history. Apart from Samuel, 2012[1994], major theoretical works in heritage studies include Smith, 2006; Smith & Akagawa (eds.), 2009; Daly & Winter (eds.) 2012 and Lowenthal 2011[1985].

nation building'.[25] Both of these sub-disciplines are relevant as sounding boards to this study which draws on indigenous sources in Alor where orality, material culture or 'history objects', sites, and landscapes are important aspects of history and memory.

On a basic level this study aims at exploring ways in which Alor history can be studied. Much focus is put on oral traditions, the sources which Samuel, with a touch of irony, called the 'lower depths – history's nether-world – where memory and myth intermingle'.

One reason for this choice is the colonial context, where the population in Alor until the end of the colonial period were regarded as 'utterly primitive' by producers of the written historical record. This does not mean disregarding the archives, but it is a way of refusing written words overruling spoken words. When we emphasize indigenous modes of history, the issues raised differ from the issues found in the colonial archive. Another, even more important motivation for this approach, is the importance the oral sources have in indigenous modes of history in Alor.

There seems to be a universal urge to relate to the past. This is shared by all humans, although the grounds for authority differ. Such universal approaches to history and uses of history and heritage can be taken far, and are important reminders not to exoticize history and its uses. Still, a case can be made for the differences in how humans relate to the past and how they practise history, not least via different metaphors for time and space. The historyscapes presented in the empirical section pay close attention to indigenous modes of history in Alor, Indonesia.

Questions and purpose - Exploring issues in Alor historiography

During the New Order era (1965-1998), history in Indonesia served to build the image of a nation liberated from the chains of colonialism. History was an important tool for the authoritarian regime under President Suharto. A typical history-making strategy was to search the archipelago for people and events in former times that could be claimed as examples of anti-colonial heroes fighting the foreign lords.

In Indonesia, the events that peaked in 1998 opened a window of opportunity for history-makers of all categories. Suharto resigned in 1998 and the New Order regime came to an end in a time of political and monetary crisis. In the years to follow decisive steps were taken towards democratization. This was also an era of decentralization. In this transformation process the district level in the Indonesian administration was elevated and became an important economic and political instance.

In the wake of these developments, history became exceptionally mouldable matter. The past was open to interpretation in a manner it had not been during the New Order. This contributed to a general interest in

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[25] Smith, 2006, p. 11.

formulating history and dedicating new heritage sites, especially in the districts.

After the turn of the millennium, various actors in Alor began to express a desire for the formulation of history. It was not the national history of Indonesia they asked for, but their own history, 'our history'; that told of places and people to whom they could relate in a more intimate manner.

In the early stage of this history boom, the content of 'our history' seemed obvious and self-evident. It was only waiting to be written. The sources were not archives of documents. They were stories and songs; it was trails which the ancestors had trodden, places they had named, and objects pregnant with meaning inherited from previous generations. Among urban administrators this notion of history and its sources was paired with a hope that history would be manifest as texts waiting to be translated from a foreign language they did not master. It was a disappointment for them to realize that the thick book *The People of Alor* by the American anthropologist Cora Du Bois was not an encyclopaedia of Alor.[26]

A common preconception in Alor was that there existed one true History and if only all concerned – this primarily meaning knowledgeable senior men – would share their pieces of historical knowledge, a jigsaw puzzle of Alor history could be pieced together.

However, things were not as straightforward as many had anticipated. History-makers in Alor ran into a number of problems: instead of one story many versions of many stories emerged. This unwanted complexity was further complicated by old conflicts lurking in the reeds. Often the issues dated back to late colonial time, especially the first three decades of the 20th century, when the colonial government vigorously pursued a policy of control. In that period land was divided and rulers appointed in a manner that went contrary to indigenous perceptions of legitimacy. These colonial intrusions had caused wounds that time had not healed.

Another issue was that not everybody approved of sharing their stories. In Alor, history is commonly perceived as something hot and dangerous. It consists of messages from the ancestors, sacred and secret. Or as one saying in the Adang-speaking area goes: 'history is something you fold up and sit upon', meaning that the past is something you only bring out when you have to, primarily in order to prevent transgressions against a collective sense of justice. Also, in some instances people in certain positions had private interests in controlling the right to narrate the past. In short, writing history and thus making it public was not a desirable development in all camps. Despite these obstacles and objections the interest in history and the urge to produce texts about 'our history' remained strong in many circles in Alor.

If the widespread desire for Alor history or histories was to be taken seriously, some challenging issues needed to be handled.

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[26] Du Bois, 1944.

The initial questions were:

How to deal with the many voices that demanded to be heard?

How to manage sources situated in ontologies where actors were not necessarily human and all kinds of spirit-beings interfered?

How to understand geographies that refused all existing maps?

In response to these challenges a concept and method was developed, which I have chosen to label 'historyscapes'. Historyscapes are situated history, using indigenous sources and modes of relating the past. The purpose of the methodology is to explore ways of managing concurrent histories based on heterogeneous sources, and to fathom how places and people connect in geographies that might not coincide with maps designed to suit administrators.

The historyscape methodology is designed to answer the following empirical questions:

What are the themes and key stories in indigenous history in Alor?

What socio-geographical groupings and divisions are relevant from the perspective of indigenous history?

Who are the relevant actors, and what are the main issues, according to historical traditions in different parts of the island?

What can other 'external' sources, including the colonial, contribute to the understanding of Alor history?

Historyscapes in Alor is a study of history in post-colonial and post-dictatorship Indonesia. It introduces and applies a methodology designed for the settings dominated by non-written sources. The approach is cross-disciplinary and borrows theoretical concepts and practices from different fields. An important point is that indigenous sources deserve to be equated with written sources on the referential level. Oral and other non-written sources need to be treated with the same level of accuracy.

In accordance with practices in many indigenous knowledge systems, historyscapes take both the spatial and temporal aspects of history into account. The indigenous perspective is of overarching importance. Alor historyscapes involve history as seen from mountain ranges, from trails through arid eucalyptus forests and grass plains, history as seen from a canoe and from a village overlooking the sea.

The historyscapes presented in the study investigate many of 'our histories' in Alor. Each historyscape is based on interviews with custodians of historical traditions around Alor. The selection of sources was carried out by reference to members of a group or inhabitants of a site. It was left to the custodians to define the content of 'our history'.

Through close readings of transcribed texts from interviews, four historyscapes appeared: the four geographical areas of historical relevance in

Alor. This place-oriented reading was followed by another reading in which the texts were analysed with time as the organizing principle. The resulting chronologies pointed to crucial issues, events, and developments in the historyscapes. The chronological readings were complemented with archive-based research and the use of secondary sources. Alor is a small island; however, historical experiences turned out to vary considerably over short distances.

The purpose of this study is twofold: i) to contribute to the development of methodologies for historical research in societies mainly oriented to non-written sources, and ii) to present the results of fundamental research into Alor history and to point to historical periods and events deserving of further attention.

In the remaining parts of this chapter, theoretical considerations are presented, followed by a discussion of methods and sources. In a separate section, background information about Alor Island is presented. Finally some important themes from previous research are highlighted.

Theory

History modes, gaps, time metaphors, and truthfulness

A few fundamental assumptions are important to the approach behind the historyscape methodology. One is based on experiences in Alor and of presenting results based on research in Alor in academic contexts; the existence of different modes of history or history-related habits of perception. To some extent these experiences are shared with other researchers working in settings outside their own ontological habitus or perceptual comfort zone.[27]

In the Alor case, a rough division can be made between academic history modes and indigenous history modes. In this context both 'academic' and 'indigenous' refers to perspectives, not schools or explicit ideologies. It is a rough classification referring to complexes of ideas and perceptions where there is a measure of consensus about what history is, what the purposes of history are, and on what basis (sources) narratives about the past should be formulated.

Academic history refers to the discipline of history as it has developed since the 19th century, into – to quote historian Minoru Hokari –

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[27] Within the history discipline I have primarily come across these discussions in literature associated with the sub disciplines of Ethnohistory and Subaltern studies. A sympathetic and interesting approach is found in Greg Dening (1988) and (2004). In anthropology the understanding that there are different ways of perceiving the world is inherent to the discipline; however anthropology has been criticized for static approaches. For a discussion on the historicization of anthropology, see Ohnuki-Tierney (1990) which is the introduction to an edited volume on the subject (Ohnuki-Tierney (ed.) 1990). Another important work in this strain is Dube (ed.), 2008[2007].

'modern/Western/rational/secular/universal historical writings'.[28] This is a simplification and may even be an unfair description of a discipline harbouring great diversity, but I still find it useful when describing mainstream understandings of history based on Western academic traditions. One alternative to the 'academic history mode' could be to call this the 'Authorized History Discourse', paralleling the concept of Authorized Heritage Discourse mentioned in the introduction.[29]

Indigenous history refers to history as a situated knowledge with specific practices and understandings about how the past is constituted, preserved, and represented. It can contain rationalities other than mainstream academic history. I have chosen to use the term 'indigenous history', while another possibility might have been 'local history'. The decision is influenced by Arjun Appadurai's discussion on the production of locality in *Modernity at Large*. My understanding of Appadurai is that he delivers a heavy critique of anthropology as a discipline rendering itself irrelevant in the modern world by its tradition of studying 'local' groups while disregarding connectivity. Appadurai argued that: 'locality is an inherently fragile social achievement. Even in the most intimate, spatially confined, geographically isolated situations, locality must be maintained carefully against various kinds of odds'.[30] Indigenous histories in Alor are very much about mobile peoples, social connections, and the creation of 'neighbourhoods' of peoples living in different places but who are connected through shared stories about ancestors. Hence the term 'local' is misleading.

I argue that both academic history and indigenous history are relevant in approaching Alor pasts. While they share some features, they are also different. One such significant difference lies in the baseline for ordering the past. While academic history uses temporality for orientation, indigenous history in Alor is more concerned with spatiality. Although timelines and dates are important for creating orientation in academic history, travels/movements and places are essential in indigenous history. These basic ordering principles point to the importance of metaphors in which time and place are perceived.

In her research in North America on the relationship between a Kiowa artist and a Swedish-American patron, the historian Gunlög Fur found that her main Kiowa source had an approach to the subject that 'draws attention to place, to history as sedimentation, rather than strings of events'. To Fur this and other experiences of concurrent but different histories created the possibility of using archaeology as a metaphor for historical work; that is to make place 'the holder or owner of history instead of, or at least alongside, people'.[31]

[28] Hokari, 2011, p. 264.
[29] See Smith, 2006.
[30] Appadurai, 1996, p. 179.
[31] Fur, forthcoming.

In a subsequent discussion on different perceptions of time, Fur pointed to the way the Apache/Mexica philosopher V.F. Cordova has described a linear understanding of time, one of the conventions in academic history and Western thinking in general, as a box divided into the three sections: the past, the present, and the future. This concept, Cordova argued, gives time a thing-like nature. This is manifested in fantasies about travelling through time. In religious thinking it leads to the end of time. In secular thought it is the basis for ideas of progress through time. Instead of the compartmentalized box Cordova urged her readers to think of time as a ball where layers of 'present' were slowly added to a continuously expanding 'past'. With such an understanding of time, which Cordova attributed to American Indians, the world is not moving ahead through time towards the future, but is constantly created through actions in the present.[32]

This urge to move between perceptions of time leads to another assumption made in this thesis, namely that actors can move between different history modes and can experience familiarity in more than one mode. Hence it is possible to learn and internalize conventions of interpretation within different history modes, while still keeping them separate. The real challenge lies in bridging the differences.

In *Provincializing Europe*, Dipesh Chakrabarty relates Ranajit Guha's now classic study of the 1855 Santal rebellion in India. Chakrabarty discusses how different modes of explanation are concurrently present: there is Guha's Marxist analysis of the oppressed people [academic history mode]. There is also the leader of the rebellion who claimed to take orders of the Santal god Thakur [indigenous history mode].[33] Chakrabarty's conclusion was that there was no third voice that could assimilate these different voices. Instead, Chakrabarty argued '…we have to stay with both, and with the gap between them that signals an irreducible plurality in our own experiences of historicity'.[34]

The 'gap' was also a central dilemma to Minoru Hokari, a Japanese historian who began by studying Gurindji history during his training to become a professional historian, first in the academic history mode using textual sources, and then by working with members of the aboriginal Gurindji community in the Northern Territory in Australia. Immersing himself in their mode of history, Hokari found himself between two worlds. In one passage he stated:

> *...it is important to acknowledge the 'gap' between the academic mode of history and the Gurindji people's historical practice. We*

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[32] Moore et al., 2007, p. 118 in Fur, forthcoming.
[33] Chakrabarty, 2008[2000], p. 102-106.
[34] Chakrabarty, 2008[2000], p. 108.

should not ignore this gap and pretend *that we can all share 'history' without much trouble.*[35]

One way to make the 'gap' productive is to use it as a position for observation of different history modes.[36] The 'gap' is situated outside the comfort zone of acknowledged practices and preconceptions in any of the studied modes. Elizabeth Tonkin, an anthropologist working on the social construction of oral history by the Jlao Kru of Liberia, made an important point when she stated that:

> *Historians have labelled as 'myth' what seem unrealistic ways of representing the past, but it can sometimes be shown that mythic structures encode history, that is they register actual happenings or significant changes. 'Realism', on the other hand, is an equally culture-bound judgment of likelihood.* [37]

In the Alor case the 'myth' label could be applied to many narratives about the past that in the Alor mode of history are factual and real. Dismissing them from the pool of sources on which Alor history can draw would mean dismissing indigenous modes of history. In addition this would deny academic history unique information embedded in 'myth'.

A similar situation is found in the Australian aboriginal context of the Gurindji people, where Hokari identified two categories of history; Dreaming and Colonial history. Dreaming is '[p]lace-oriented stories which have been "active" throughout history'. Dreaming is '…"everywhere" and "everywhen".'[38] Aboriginal stories about encounters with Colonial people were a separate category. Both were 'real' stories. The relevant difference was that Dreaming stories were sacred while Colonial stories concerned invading another people's land and killing Indigenous people, and hence these stories were immoral.[39]

Neither Dreaming nor Colonial stories turned out to be immediately compatible with academic history. Hokari came to the conclusion that Gurindji history was not a history based on modern-Western empiricism, but on 'experiential truthfulness'. The Colonial stories might not be accurate in details, but they contained experiences of colonialism expressed in a truthful manner.[40]

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[35] Hokari, 2011, p. 94.

[36] The 'gap' discussed here differs from the gap which Raphael Samuel described as a driving force in mainstream academic history, namely the idea of a gap in knowledge about a certain subject – often used to motivate research (Samuel, 2012[1994], p. 3).

[37] Tonkin, 1999[1992], p. 8.

[38] Hokari, 2011, p. 80.

[39] Hokari, 2011, p. 116; p. 149.

[40] Hokari, 2011, p. 262-263.

In this, Hokari referred to Tessa Morris-Suzuki who has argued for a distinction between 'historical truth' and 'historical truthfulness', where historical truthfulness concerns relationships between enquiring subject and the object of enquiry, puts focus on the process of historical enquiry and draws attention to the positionality and biases of the historian.[41]

The suggestion of seeking for 'truthfulness' rather than 'truth' is enabling, and also closer to what any historian can actually ever achieve. One real challenge lies in bridging the 'gap' between different history modes.[42]

Dating and maps – or: When was 1814?

While I do find that different history modes mostly coexist in parallel paths, there are also examples from Alor of academic and indigenous history modes becoming entangled – with varying outcomes. One example is a book about heritage sites published by the district authorities in Alor. The book is written by employees at the district culture office. Each site is presented with a historical background. One such text about a house with official heritage status begins:

> *According to the local community, around the year 1814 a boat sailed along the coast from the East. The boat was not controlled by humans, but tugged by a whale.* [43]

The text goes on to describe how the boat was observed by people along the shore. Voices were heard from inside the boat. Eventually the boat stopped and a door opened. To the surprise of the locals no humans were found inside the vessel, instead there were seeds from maize, rice, and edible tubers.

The claim that this happened in the year 1814 seems like a borrowing from conventions in academic history where time is essential.[44] But it is not likely that an academic historian would argue that a whale brought a boat with singing seeds to Benlelang bay in 1814. Meanwhile the singing seeds, the whale, and other elements in the text, have an Alor-ish flavour, but when I showed the text to indigenous historians it was emphatically rejected. They claimed that the text was a misrepresentation of their history, as most details were incorrect.

So it seems the text incorporates elements from both academic and indigenous history without gaining credibility in any of the camps.[45] This is an

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[41] Morris-Suzuki, 2001.

[42] See also Morris-Suzuki, 2011, where she engages with and comments upon Hokari's work.

[43] Ndjurumana, 2008, p. 84-85, translation by Wellfelt.

[44] There seems to have developed some kind of standard in this kind of text. My interpretation is that a date in the 1800s is roughly translatable as 'historical time' in academic history.

[45] The aim is not to show the mistakes of the authors of the heritage book. The story as told by the indigenous people is included in the chapter about the Abui historyscape. Other sources from the same area are likely to find many faults in the way the story is narrated here.

example of the many ironic misunderstandings that tend to appear during the process of heritagization, but it also reveals ideals in different modes of history active in Alor.

When I set out on this research project, my intention was to study the processes that occurred when practices from academic history and international heritage discourses met with indigenous understandings of history and heritage in Alor.[46] However, during the course of research in Alor I found that history was to many people such a sincere, urgent, and important topic that in contrast the mesh of misunderstandings arising from attempts to formulate history without having the means of the academic historian (such as access to archives and libraries, language skills, and adequate training) was interesting but less relevant than discovering what indigenous history actually involved.

One of the findings from my analysis of indigenous history was that geographical and administrative divisions in Alor which can be easily understood from the perspective of academic history did not make sense from the indigenous perspective. The administrative map is based on a colonial constructions of realms designed for indirect rule through a handful of local *raja*. Indigenous history is not oblivious of these divisions, but very often other priorities and interests come to the fore. Hence the need to undo borders in order to be able to assess how peoples and places are connected through shared memories and stories. A new geography is required. 'Historyscapes' should thus be understood as a term that unites conceptual and geographical perceptions of an area or realm. A historyscape is shaped and marked off from other areas by stories and perceptions about, as well as experiences from, a shared past.

Narratology and sources

One problem when working on indigenous sources in Alor was the multifaceted surface of wordings and the often striking performances through which history was conveyed. These are fascinating and important aspects of a mostly oral history, but I wanted to go past *how* history was told to find out *what* was told, and to equate the indigenous 'archive' with the academic 'archive'.

For these purposes it was useful to apply a basic framework from literary studies to the sources. One of the pioneers of narratology, Gérard Genette, proposed a tripartite model consisting of *histoire*, *récit*, and *narration*. In literary theorist Rimmon-Kenan's application of the model, **story** or *histoire* '...designates the narrated events, abstracted from their disposition in the text and reconstructed in their chronological order, together with the participants in these events'. While story is a succession of events, **text** or *récit* is 'a spoken or written discourse which undertakes their telling. Put more simply, text is

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[46] I have presented papers and published articles on this subject (Wellfelt, 2013; 2015).

what we read [or hear]. In it, the events do not necessarily appear in the chronological order, the characteristics of the participants are dispersed throughout, and all the items of the narrative content are filtered through some prism or perspective ('focalizer')'.[47] **Narration** (*narration*) suggests 'a *communication* process in which the narrative as message is transmitted by addresser to addressee and […] the *verbal* nature of the medium used to transmit the message'.[48]

To summarise, the story is an underlying level that is projected into the text level; it is what the text is telling. The text is what we read or hear. Even a fragmentary text can convey an underlying story level. Narration is sharing. Through narration of texts we communicate stories.

The model applies to different stages of research and analysis in this study: In sessions at different locations in Alor, keepers of tradition narrated history, mostly in response to an open-ended question about 'your history'. These sessions were recorded in different ways, as notes or as transcribed video and audio recordings, in each case resulting in written texts.

The texts often moved back and forth in time, following the flow of the narrator's mind. Typically, sub-stories were inserted, and forgotten parts were mentioned as they came to mind. When possible the same source was interviewed more than once. Some stories were narrated by more than one source. In all the result was a rich but unruly mass of texts.

For the purpose of mapping the historyscapes, the way forward was to approach the material as texts containing stories. Through analysis of the story level it was possible to discern important themes and more or less distinct stories from a multitude of complex, detailed, and often not so coherent texts representing different genres, styles, and languages.

While borrowing a general framework from literature, the analysis does not proceed with a narratological analysis in the literary sense, not because it cannot be done, but because it does not serve the purposes of this study.

To some extent I agree with the literary theorist Dorrit Cohn who engaged in formulating a model for historical narratology. Cohn's model was a reaction to the literary turn in history, spearheaded by Hayden White, who underlined the fictional character in history texts. Contrary to this, Cohn claimed that the conditions for writing history were quite different from those of writing fiction:

> *…the process that transforms archival sources into narrative history is qualitatively different from (and indeed hardly comparable to) the process that transforms a novelist's sources (whether*

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[47] Rimmon-Kenan, S, 1996[1983], p. 3.
[48] Rimmon-Kenan, S, 1996[1983], p. 2 (italics in original).

autobiographical, anecdotal, or even historical) into his fictional creation. [49]

Contrary to authors of fiction who had endless possibilities, Cohn argued, historians were limited to their sources – or in Morris-Suzuki's terms to historical truthfulness. She described the historian's work process as:

> *...highly constrained and controlled, subject to the author's justification and the reader's scrutiny, with its obligatory correspondence to the happenings it narrates overtly displayed in the text itself'.* [50]

Cohn proposed a framework for historical narratology where the analytical division between story and text (or, in Cohn's terminology, story and discourse) that forms the basis for narratological studies of fiction was supplemented with a referential level that Cohn equated with a 'data base'.[51]

There is no indication of Cohn considering any history mode other than the academic. Still, her proposal of a referential level can be made into an important point when it comes to how academic history uses oral sources, especially in intercultural contexts. It is surprisingly common to provide full references to written materials, while oral sources are used without the same courtesy or accuracy. When appropriate for enhancing a statement or giving flavour to a narrative based on textual sources, sweeping mention is made of oral traditions. This is problematic as there is no way of evaluating the sources, which is central to source critical historiography; without attributing indigenous sources a referential level they will remain obscure.

To counteract this (mal)practice in academic history, the notion of a referential level was applied into the historyscape methodology. The stories are organized into a corpus (appendix A) for cross-referencing. While admittedly imperfect in execution, the corpus has the advantage of elucidating important properties in different areas. It also provides metadata about the narrators and the context in which the texts were narrated.

While working on corpus stories, the map of Alor historyscapes began to materialize (see illustration 8, page 70). The map of Alor historyscapes is based on the way stories connect geographical and social space. This turned out to be different from both historical and modern maps.

To summarise: the working process with the historyscapes began with using the 'gap' to sense the history modes and conventions in action. Then the focus was deliberately placed on what indigenous history was telling. To isolate the content from performance and form (narration and text) the

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[49] Cohn, 1990. p. 781.
[50] Cohn, 1990. p. 781.
[51] Cohn, 1990. p. 782.

material was read and analysed to bring out the story level in narratives about Alor pasts. In that process, different groupings and historical connections formed the basis for the geographical representation of historyscapes. The result was four geographical areas in Alor that were historically connected or entangled through shared pasts and historical orientations. Key stories from different groups were formulated together with discussions intended to decode them for readers outside the indigenous narrators' conventions of interpretation. Finally archival sources and narratives from the academic history mode were inserted into the historyscapes to further elucidate Alor history.

As the orally conveyed stories of the indigenous 'archive', colonial documents are narrated texts. The stories conveyed through these texts primarily concern issues of interest to the colonial administration. Many important themes in the colonial sources are irrelevant to indigenous history, and many important themes in indigenous history are absent in the archival sources. In that sense they are concurrent in Fur's definition: 'disparate spheres of existence and meaning that are interlinked but do not necessarily overlap and are not organized hierarchically – even though asymmetrical power relations will influence these relations'.[52]

The historyscape methodology is a way to listen to many voices, handle hegemonies related to different history modes, and provide translations between modes. Because the reader is expected to be closer to academic history than to indigenous history in Alor, most of the explicit bridging efforts aim at explaining indigenous history.

Methods

Interdisciplinary research

This study is based on an explorative approach to Alor history and to research methods. In my studies of indigenous history I was looking for stories about Alor pasts, but also keys to understanding these stories. The most adequate label for my methods would be 'ethnographic'. As Mark-Anthony Falzon has put it, ethnography is '…an eclectic methodological choice which privileges an engaged, contextually rich and nuanced type of qualitative social research…'.[53]

Five periods of fieldwork, each lasting two to three months, were undertaken between the years 2009-2012. In addition, field notes from earlier research in Alor (2002-2003; 2007) are included when applicable. Various field techniques were used, including interviews, observations, audio and

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[52] Fur, forthcoming.
[53] Falzon, 2009, p. 1.

quiver of arrows. The warrior began a dance that is a throwback to the days when the Alorese were head-hunters. But today he was just impressing a visitor, and his cutlass was not going to see any use. As soon as he was finished, he jumped back into the hut and emerged smiling in his civilian clothes: a dirty shirt and a ragged pair of pants.[186]

Alor might have changed in the course of 474 years, but the first impressions men in Alor can make on foreign visitors seem remarkably stable.

Ill 5. "Cakalele" is a warlike dance performed to greet guests. In Atimelang, 2007. Photo: Emilie Wellfelt

[186] Muller, 1995, p. 163.

Previous research

Introduction

In the following, four research themes informing this study are introduced. These are: i) research on indigenous oral history; ii) research that reaches beyond the 'colonial beach' of first contacts; iii) research on material culture, pointing to the potential of using material culture in historical studies, and iv) research on the cultural heritage in Indonesia.

This is research that has been formative to my own approach to Alor history, and presents strains of thought that stand out as important to me after having engaged in Alor historyscapes.

There is a recent publication, *Archipel 90, L'Est Insulinidien* (2015) with articles by well-established researchers presenting state of the art research in and about Eastern Indonesia. This gives a good overview of several fields including archaeology, history, anthropology, linguistics, and musicology in Eastern Indonesia, meaning this information need not be repeated here.[187]

Studying what happened or what was remembered?

In a general sense this study navigates the waters between researchers like Jan Vansina and Jan Assman while 'holding hands' with the ethnohistorian Peter Nabokov – and other historians seriously engaging with indigenous knowledge systems.

While the historian Vansina stands for empiricist academic history, Assman (an Egyptologist by trade) calls his line of investigation 'mnemohistory'.

Assman makes a point of the necessity of separating 'history proper' from 'mnemohistory': 'The historical study of the events should be carefully distinguished from the study of their commemoration, tradition, and transformation in the collective memory of the people concerned'.[188] Similar terms for mnemohistory are 'uses of history' or 'historicity'.[189]

While this dichotomy is less self-evident than it might seem (for instance the memory of events tend to be affected by the nature of events), it is still useful. A related distinction was made by the anthropologist Bernard S. Cohn who stated that:

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[187] This special issue of Archipel includes articles by Rappoport & Guillaud, O'Connor, Galipaud, Hägerdal, Schapper, Yampolsky, Fox, Barraud, Guillaud, Rappoport, and Barnes.

[188] Assman, 1998[1997], p. 14.

[189] The terminologies at least partly reflect different academic origins. Uses of history is a strong field in Sweden and originates in the history discipline. A standard work in that field is Aronsson, 2004. Historicity or historicities is favoured in anthropology and was propagated by Emiko Ahnuki-Tierney (1990) who objected to the term 'historical consciousness' as giving the impression that people were conscious of how they related to history.

The first reaction of anthropologists to the fact that natives had other kinds of pasts than they did was to apply their own conception of 'real events' to statements that natives made about the past and to construct for them 'objective' histories about what 'really' happened [...][But now] [t]he texts and codified oral traditions are read not to establish chronologies nor to sift historical fact from mythical fancy, but to try to grasp the meanings of the forms and contents of these texts in their own cultural terms.[190]

The development described by Cohn is a move in the direction from Vansina towards Assman and this study also leans in that direction. With this said, Vansina and also Ruth Finnegan made seminal contributions, not least methodologically, working with history in Africa where oral traditions prevailed and written sources were scarce.[191] During fieldwork I always carried a shortlist mainly based on Vansina (1985), reminding myself of the need to pay attention to i) who the narrator was (age, gender, status – if possible asking for their life history); ii) indigenous genres and categories (were stories perceived as true-untrue, fact-fiction? Were there cumulative genres, lists, memory of rituals, genealogies? Any memorized speech, remembered by rote?), and iii) the recording situation (including my own role and how I was perceived in the recording situation).

As Nabokov has remarked, Vansina, by his 'pioneering if narrowly empiricist analysis of oral history' in Africa paved the way for later research such as John and Jean Comaroff, again in Nabokov's words: 'more nuanced attempts […] to write "neomodern" historical anthropology for South Africa's colonial period', giving place for indigenous counterhistories.[192]

In my work on historyscapes, the explicit intention has been to do as Cohn suggested; to grasp the meaning of the forms and content of Alor narratives about the past and to approach these stories in their own cultural terms. Rather than looking for indigenous stories supporting archival (colonial) sources, I have taken the indigenous stories as my point of departure and investigated in a broad and often eclectic manner whether other sources or disciplines can add something to the understanding of Alor histories.[193]

Others who I think have balanced in the Vansina-Assman void, with research geographically close to Alor, include Janet Hoskins (Sumba), Jim Fox (Rote and Savu), Robert Barnes (Solor), Ruth Barnes (Solor), Susanne Rodemeier (Pantar), Genevieve Duggan (Savu), Andrew McWilliam (Timor),

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[190] Cohn, 1987, p. 67-69.
[191] Vansina, 1997[1985]; Finnegan, 1992.
[192] Nabokov, 2009[2002], p. 22 referring to Vansina 2006[1961]; 1997[1985] and Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992.
[193] Taking this indigenous perspective, a few works have been especially important as reminders of historicities other than those represented by mainstream academic history. This includes Nabokov, (2009[2002]), Hokari (2011), Tuhiwai Smith (1999), and Trouillot (1995).

and Timo Kaartinen (Kei). All of them have at times engaged in indigenous history – which mirrors the importance of historical perspectives but also the importance of history in these societies. Timo Kaartinen specifically set out to carry out a historical study in Banda Eli in Kei, but as he mentions in one place he 'failed to find history in the European, scholarly sense'.[194] Instead, he found two indigenous history modes which he called songs of travel and stories of place.

Perhaps not finding history in the scholarly sense is less problematic if you are not a trained historian; most historical research in Eastern Indonesia has been conducted by scholars from other disciplines, primarily anthropology and art history. The works of 'history proper' about Alor thus far published are the result of research by Hans Hägerdal, who has also published important source materials.[195] Earlier contributions to Alor history were provided by the linguist W.A.L. Stokhof, the anthropologist Susanne Rodemeier, and the social scientist Syarifuddin Gomang, all three relying on written sources and field studies in Alor.[196] A rapid rise in linguistic research in the TAP languages (Timor-Alor-Pantar) has generated some work with immediate relevance to historical research.[197]

History beyond the colonial beach

A common critique against historical research in parts of the world that are or have been subject to European colonialism is that such histories get 'stuck to the beach'. They begin with the appearance of the first Europeans. Even with the best of intentions, the focus tends to be on the cross-cultural encounters in this period. However, as ethnohistorian Peter Nabokov has argued:

> *...deciphering the unfolding cultural logic of these high-tension periods, what Sahlins has called the "structure of conjuncture," still left unplumbed any native expressions and applications of their own historical discourses when no Europeans were around.*[198]

Nabokov's response to the biased interest in the Europeans was to engage in American Indian ways of history. His work *A Forest of Time* explores history and historicity, highlighting different perspectives and properties of indigenous history. Many of the issues he discusses are applicable to the Alor case. The historyscapes presented here focus on situated stories that convey indigenous knowledge going beyond the text level and requiring keys to be deciphered. In a forward-looking discussion Nabokov argues for the need for

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[194] Kaartinen, 2010, p. 31.
[195] Hägerdal 2010a; 2010b; 2011. Hägerdal has also published an overview of historical research in Eastern Indonesia (Hägerdal, 2015).
[196] Stokhof, 1977, 1984. Rodemeier, 1993; 2006. Gomang, 1993.
[197] Klamer, 2012; Katubi (ed.), 2005.
[198] Nabokov, 2009[2002], p. 23.

academic historians to 'apprentice themselves to the sorts of social, symbolic, economic, political and folkloristic data that are the meat and potatoes of anthropology'.[199]

In both the USA and Australia the indigenous peoples were subject to settler colonialism, making the term of post-colonialism questionable.[200] This was aptly demonstrated by the Aborigine activist Bobbi Sykes commenting at a conference on post-colonialism: 'What? Post-colonialism? Have they left?'[201]

Exploitation colonialism, a term applicable to the Dutch East Indies, does make 'post-colonialism' a more meaningful term. The few Europeans who stayed in Alor really did leave – though this is a simplistic way of describing the end of colonialism. Arguably the critique against history focusing on Europeans and their interactions with indigenous peoples becomes even more relevant in places where colonialism had less impact than in the USA or Australia.

Working on indigenous history in Alor, the role of the Europeans who colonized them sometimes seems superficial, random, and parenthetical. This is emphasized by the tendency in Alor history to begin with creation and continue into the present. In Alor the most intrusive and lasting impacts of European colonialism were made in the Bird´s Head-West Alor historyscape where the Dutch settled in the late 19th century. The European presence did alter indigenous politics and geographies there and in other places. But overall in Alor, the post-independence period, especially the New Order era (1965-1998), seems more radical than European colonialism. To become modern citizens of Indonesia people had to conform. Everybody was expected to live in a New Style village with houses along a straight village street and to adhere to one of the government approved world religions.

The New Order also encouraged history writing where the new nation acquired a great past manifested by the Majapahit kingdom in Java. In national textbooks of the New Order era, Majapahit during the reign of Hayam Wuruk (1350-1389) is depicted as the zenith of Indonesian history. In the six volume *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia* (National History of Indonesia), it is stated that with assistance from his high official Gadjah Mada, Hayam Wuruk 'succeeded in carrying the kingdom of Majapahit to the height of its greatness'.[202]

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[199] Nabokov, 2009[2002], p. 236.

[200] I mention the USA and Australia here as research from those countries has been important to this study. Other countries could be added to the list, including Sweden. Living in Sweden in 2016 I am witnessing how the 'general public' in Sweden is apparently, and with a dawning feeling of surprise, realizing that Sweden has a colonial past and present and that the Sami peoples of the north have suffered appalling repression. One expression of this awakening is the Swedish Church publishing a 'white book' on the historical relationships between the Swedish church and the Sami (Lindmark & Sundström (eds.), 2016).

[201] Tuhawai Smith, 1999, p. 24.

[202] Poesponegoro, 1990, vol. 2, p. 436, cited in Wood, 2005, p. 49.

In a study entitled Official History in Modern Indonesia, Michael Wood has remarked that the National History of Indonesia '…has nothing to say about the ordinary people of Majapahit, the emphasis is wholly on the activities of rulers and bureaucrats…'[203]

The preoccupation with Majapahit, its rulers and bureaucrats in Indonesian historiography resonates with the New Order regime. The interest in the centre (Java) added to the creation of geographical and social margins. The history boom in Alor after decentralization followed two trajectories, both reactions to marginalization signalled by New Order teachings of 'Majapahit history'. The urban elite reaction was to repeat the set pattern on a small scale, placing Alor and Kalabahi in the centre, while focusing on rulers and bureaucrats. Another popular reaction was to engage in Alor histories following the existing indigenous models for representing the past.

History of the 'uncivilized' margins

One incentive to approach Alor pasts as historyscapes was the possibility to allow for history from different perspectives; to 'hand the microphone' to people of different geographical and social positions. This became especially important in view of the often derogatory attitudes towards people in the margins – in the margins of the nation, and of modernity. It is in the eye of the beholder that Alor might be described as a very remote place; for people in Alor it is of course the centre of their world. On another scale, within Alor, there is a tendency for coastal populations to regard people in the interiors as less civilized. This can be illustrated by the Alorese researcher Gomang, arguing that the Alores (referring to the coastal Alorese-speaking community in the Bird´s Head of Alor) are egalitarian, without connecting this with attitudes towards other groups. Gomang was correct in stating that the Alorese are egalitarian in the sense that there is no elaborate aristocracy. However in relation to other groups there are the people of the coast (*watang*) and the inland (*woto*) and people of other islands. The *woto*, Gomang explains, are divided into *ulu* and *barawahing*. The *ulu* are in-groups to the Alorese, meaning they can stand in a brotherhood relationship (kakari) to Alorese groups while the *barawahing* are outgroup, hence not eligible for close brotherhood relationships.[204] However, as Gomang also points out:

> '*For the Alorese the word* ulu *is always associated with backwardness or lower status. Thus* moha nomo nihing ulu hire ('*you are like people from inland*') *is a sarcastic term for one who do some things improperly or a stereotype for people from backward communities or of lower status*'.[205]

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[203] Wood, 2005, p. 50. As Wood goes on to remark, this might partially be dictated by the sources.
[204] Gomang, 1993, p. 134. Barawahing in general refer Abui-speaking groups.
[205] Gomang, 1993, p. 133.

In Alor and elsewhere such images have and have had great impact on the lives and histories of the stereotyped groups. Not least have they been subject to the civilizing policies and efforts of governments both colonial and national.[206]

While margins and peripheries do imply being outside and perhaps victimized, James Scott takes a refreshing perspective in his analysis in *The art of not being governed*. Scott analyses relations between downstream and upstream peoples (the *watang* and *woto* concept in Alorese, *hulu* and *hilir* in Malay) in mainland Southeast Asia in terms of 'internal colonialism', as the 'encounter between expansionary states and self-governing peoples'.[207] Rather than seeing sadly underdeveloped peripheries, Scott finds agency and strategic choices. His discussion on orality, writing, and texts is especially invigorating. Scott argues that '[a] diagnostic feature of the condition of barbarism is, for lowland elites, nonliteracy […] Bringing preliterate peoples into the world of letters and formal schooling is, of course, a raison d'être of the developmental state'.[208] Scott deliberately uses the terms 'nonliteracy' or 'orality' rather than illiteracy 'to call attention to orality as a different and potentially positive medium of cultural life as opposed to a mere deficiency'.[209]

In a similar line of argumentation where he sees swiddening and dispersal as subsistence strategies impeding appropriation and social fragmentation as means to avoid state incorporation, Scott argues that '…the absence of writing and texts provides a freedom of maneuver in history, genealogy, and legibility that frustrates state routines'.[210]

In a related strain of thought, Swedish scholar Mikela Lundahl (working in the field of intellectual history, or the history of ideas), has discussed Kenneth Harrow's book *Thresholds of Change in African Literature*.[211] To Lundahl, Harrow – or rather historical strategies of orality in a West Africa setting – has provided 'a way to work with history orally, to make the voice central to history, rather than the written sources'.[212] In a talk, Lundahl presented this as 'fluid memory':

> *Basically the idea is that in the Mande culture of West Africa, the memory of the ancestors had to be adaptable to contemporary needs. The basic structure of the way memory/history was handled was that the emperor held "the full story" and the griot was his*

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[206] The literature on this subject includes Tsing, 1993; Duncan (ed.), 2008[2004]; Li (ed.) 2004[1999]); Li, 2007; Scott, 2009.
[207] Scott, 2009, p. 1-3.
[208] Scott, 2009, p. 220.
[209] Scott, 2009, p. 221.
[210] Scott, 2009, p. 220.
[211] Harrow, 1994. Kenneth Harrow is professor of English African literature and cinema.
[212] Lundahl, 2012 (ms).

voice. The role of the griot must be understood along these lines: the interplay between the silent but knowingly [sic] *emperor, and the discourse of the griot. The voice, that is the griot, only told those versions of history that the society could coop with, that did not cause disruptions. Even though contact was established with literate cultures, as the Arabic, and the Christian, writing was not adopted, since the power over this fluid memory would be threatened, and therefore also the stability of the kingdom.*[213]

Harrow concluded that written history, for better or for worse, puts an end to the flexibility of orality. Here, Lundahl saw a parallel to material objects and heritage, where the interpreters of objects (in the specific context to which Lundahl was referring these were specialists on material culture such as curators, historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists) have the role of the *griot* in Mande culture, telling the part of the story which the audience needed to hear:

Objects and other material remains must always be interpreted, they need stories. But the story is always subordinated the material object, the material object is like the silent emperor, who holds its truths, that it won't convey.[214]

Material culture, trade, and history in Eastern Indonesia

The great importance of spatiality in Alor histories is discussed elsewhere, but another property that often surfaces when engaging in indigenous history in Alor is materiality. This, and other features in Alor indigenous history, resonates with observations by the anthropologist Janet Hoskins who worked in Kodi, West Sumba. In Kodi, Hoskins found that:

Local knowledge of the past is organized not only in narrative, but also in the visual and tactile traces left by past events: heirloom objects, features of the landscape, the special relationship established with a particular animal or location. [215]

Certain objects gained a position as 'history objects'. These could be rather prosaic items, but their cultural importance lay not in utility but in marking historical moments:

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[213] Lundahl, 2012 (ms).
[214] Lundahl, 2012 (ms).
[215] Hoskins, 1997[1993], p. 118.

They are used didactically, as "evidence" of the past and a reminder of what has been lost, giving a permanent, external form to contingent events and preserving the memory of a promise, a covenant, or an alliance. [216]

Most, but not all, 'history objects' were imported objects that reached Sumba through trade. Porcelain ceramic urns and plates, gold jewellery, swords, and gongs were the kind of items that were stored in traditional houses where, importantly, they were 'removed from circulation in exchange'.[217]

A similar range of objects has a position as 'history objects' in Alor, with one exception – the gold jewellery. In Sumba a special kind of gold ear pendant known as *mamoli*, were (and still are) part of marriage exchanges. In Alor it was another kind of metal object, the *moko*, which together with gongs served as a primary ritual and symbolic currency.

In the context of marriage exchanges in Kodi, the male side – in anthropological terminology the wife-takers – gave male valuables with the property of being durable (like the male lineage) and in return received female, perishable, valuables (such as textiles and cooked food). Among the gifts from the wife-takers were *mamoli* which, in simple terms, can be understood as payment for a woman and her fertility. In Alor the specific gift from the wife-takers was the *moko* drum. *Mamoli* and *moko* used in bridewealth transactions were in constant circulation.[218]

However, if a *mamoli* or, in Alor, a *moko* becomes a 'history object' it can no longer be circulated. A *moko* turned into a 'history object' is a powerful and living object with strong charisma which makes it impossible to keep in an ordinary home; only a lineage house or, in recent times, a church, can host such 'hot' objects.[219]

Hoskins has argued that the focus on objects as markers of past events and traditions serves the purpose of creating the impression of stability 'which seems to represent enduring offices and relationships as less open to variation than a person-centred genealogical model'. Hoskins correctly remarked that:

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[216] Hoskins, 1997[1993], p. 119.

[217] Hoskins, 1997[1993], p. 119.

[218] According to Hoskins (1997[1993], p. 140) *mamoli* in circulation could be used in transactions between families (lineages) up to nine or ten times a year.

[219] *Moko* can also be dangerous because they are too valuable to be kept at home. One way out is to bury them in some secret place, at the risk of loss if the owner dies without passing on the secret. This practice of safekeeping has historical parallels in Maluku. In a separate discussion on economy in Southeast Asia, Reid mentions how European sources in the 16th and 17th century complained about people in Maluku having the habit of hiding valuables by burying them in the ground. According to Reid an English factor in the 1620s 'pleaded that Indian cloth rather than silver reals be sent to the islands' since, after taking some for ornaments, the people in Maluku buried most of the silver 'from posterity to posterity' (Galvão 1544, p. 140-141; Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, East Indies, China and Japan, ed. W.N. Sainsbury, 5 vols., London, Longman, 1862-92: 1625-29, p. 371, here in Reid, 1993, p. 109).

'this stability can be illusory, for the offices and relationships do not in fact remain unchanged, even though the objects that represent them maintain a reassuringly ancient appearance'.[220]

In her analysis of Kodi history and historicity, Hoskins argued for the existence of two kinds of history in the Kodi context:

> *Objects belong to history as heritage of the past, an uninterrupted process that reveals the continuity of culture over time. This contrasts with the discontinuous history of recent years, called by the Indonesian term* sejarah*, in which a new ideology of process is associated with the ephemeral importance of persons. In written histories, individual heroes are introduced as the protagonists of a novel form of narrative, set on the stage of irreversible historical changes.*[221]

This can be translated to the history modes discussed here: the indigenous mode and the academic mode. Hoskins relates the 'discontinuous history' to post-independence nationalistic history where history was directed towards identification of national heroes, promoting the interpretation of insurgence and conflict in colonial time as conscious anti-colonial struggle.[222]

In some respects the properties of official Indonesian history have parallels in the interaction between elite families and the Dutch colonial administration. In contacts with the indigenous elite the colonial administrators were interested in mapping genealogies on the individual level, while indigenous approaches to kinship were more focused on generations. Taking Kolana (East Alor historyscape) as an example, members of every second generation were buried in a grave with a pole made from a durable kind of wood. Family members belonged to a pole generation or a non-pole generation.[223]

Some of the 'history objects' Hoskins documented in Sumba were textiles. This category of objects is a 'port of entry' to the past which is interesting in many ways, not least because the study of textiles involves women.[224] For different reasons women tend to be excluded from historical narratives both in academic history and indigenous history in Alor. Textiles are also interesting

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[220] Hoskins, 1997[1993], p. 138.
[221] Hoskins, 1997[1993], p. 138.
[222] Hoskins, 1997[1993], p. 138.
[223] Genealogies of *raja* families in Alor, including Kolana, were included in van Galen's Memorandum from 1946 (see Hägerdal, 2011, p. 91-96). In some cases it seems that documents with similar genealogies were kept by the *raja* families. Genealogies and copies of photographs of rulers and their families were also sent or given to *raja* families in Alor by Donald P. Tick who visited Alor in the year 2000 (personal communication with Donald P. Tick, 2010). Tick has a strong interest in the indigenous rulers of Indonesia. From the Netherlands he runs the '*Pusat dokumentasi kerajaan-kerajaan di Indonesia*' (Centre for documentation of kingdoms in Indonesia).
[224] In the Sumba context a wealth of symbolism is associated with textiles. Extant research into textiles and symbolism in Sumba is discussed in Wellfelt, 2002.

as they go beyond the uni-directional commodity. Historically, textiles were traded and imported to Southeast Asia, but also produced there. Over time Indian, Chinese, Islamic, and European influences interplayed with indigenous textile traditions.[225]

In Alor, bark-cloth was the indigenous textile which dominated in the interiors until the mid-20th century.[226] To people living in the 21st century it is difficult to imagine what an innovation woven textiles were. In 1515, Pires reported that people in Banda (Maluku) were so amazed by the novelty of cloth brought by Javanese and Malay traders that the traders were treated with supernatural reverence.[227]

Oral traditions in Alor sometimes mention migrating groups settling on the coasts as people bringing pottery.[228] The same groups tend to be associated with weaving. Pottery and textiles were bartered with peoples in the interior. This division of labour was manifested by a taboo against weaving in the interior. The same kind of prohibition against weaving by groups living in the interior is reported from Lembata, a short distance to the west of Alor.[229]

There is a distinct division in Alor between the decorative techniques that mirror the historical orientations in the island. In the Bird´s Head, coastal groups produce *ikat* textiles with clear affinities to the Solor islands, and with inspiration from Indian textiles called *patola*, produced in Gujarat in north west India from the 11th century.[230] All other weaving centres produce textiles decorated with techniques that in Indonesian are summarised as *songket*. The textile traditions from the south and east coast of Alor show affinities with Timor, which is congruent with other historical sources, both oral and written.

The last two decades have seen fruitful historical research in Eastern Indonesia, where textiles have been the point of departure for disentangling the past. In one article, Roy Hamilton showed how textile traditions in Flores could illuminate historical events both in the wider archipelago and within a

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[225] The most comprehensive work on Southeast Asian textiles, providing insightful historical perspectives, is probably Robyn Maxwell's Textiles of Southeast Asia. (Maxwell, 2003[1990]. There is an extensive literature on Indonesian textiles, mainly produced by art historians and anthropologists. Among the most important works with Indonesia as the geographical scope are Gittinger (ed.), 1979; Gittinger (ed.) 1991[1979], and Gittinger (ed.) 1989. Major works dealing with textiles in the Province of NTT, where Alor is situated, include Adams, 1969; Barnes, 1989, Duggan, 2001, Geirnaert, 1992 , Hamilton (ed.), 1994, Hamilton and Barrkman (eds.), 2014.

[226] A short overview of Alor textiles is included in Wellfelt, 2014.

[227] Pires in Reid, 1993, p. 7.

[228] This is especially distinct in East Alor, in the village of Pureman on the south coast.

[229] Barnes, 1989, p. 1.

[230] Joanna Barrkman (2009) provides a historical overview of trade with Patola from Gujarat to Eastern Indonesia and specifically the influences of *patola* in textiles from the Atoin Meto people of West Timor. The influence of *patola* as trade objects, as prestige and ritual objects in receiving societies, and as inspiration for local cloth production is well documented in the literature on textiles of the Indian Ocean and of Indonesia. An overview perspective of the subject is presented in Guy (1998) and Maxwell (2003).

particular part of Flores.[231] The historical perspective is also important in a recent book on Timor textiles, coedited by Hamilton and Joanna Barrkman.[232]

In her study *The ikat textiles of Lamalera*, Ruth Barnes made an interesting contribution in her examination of the local history of Lamalera in the Solor Islands. In this study, Barnes combined oral traditions with European archival sources.[233]

She found that when 'the two different types of historical accounts – local, oral history and the scanty European documents – are brought together and compared, the only remotely common aspect to emerge is the importance of trading'. As reflected in their histories, Lamalera was engaged in local trade and barter with inland groups. Meanwhile the European sources reflected interests in inter-island trading which put them in competition with Chinese, Indian, and Javanese traders who had long preceded the Europeans in Indonesian waters.[234]

In another step, Barnes connected Lamalera oral traditions and European archival sources with material culture, art history, and archaeology. Through the textiles 'local' history became all but local. A specific kind of textile made in Lamalera with patterns long known in Sulawesi supported oral traditions about ancestors migrating from Sulawesi.[235] Other textiles were inspired by Indian *patola* textiles (a common source of inspiration for Indonesian textiles), connecting the village with extensive trade networks. Turning to design elements in Lamalera *ikat* textiles, Barnes found consistency with bronze kettledrums from mainland Southeast Asia, also known as Dong Son drums, dated to the first millennium BCE and produced in north Vietnam-south west China. Barnes also noted similar designs in pottery excavated in the Philippines predating the bronzes.[236]

Barnes' work connects with more recent research on the distribution of bronze drums in Early Southeast Asia by Ambra Calò.[237] The distribution of Dong Son drums mainly took place around the turn of the first millennium BC/AD but continued in some instances well into the first millennium AD.[238] This places the Dong Son drums in a crucial period of 'early autochthonous Southeast Asian cultures, participating in wide-ranging exchange networks, and the first influences from China and India in Southeast Asia'.[239] Calò states that:

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[231] Hamilton, 1994.
[232] Hamilton & Barrkman, 2014.
[233] Barnes, 1989, p. 1-5; 113-140.
[234] Barnes, 1989, p. 129.
[235] Barnes, 1989, p. 122.
[236] Barnes, 1989, p. 131-135.
[237] Calò, 2009.
[238] Calò, 2009, p.1.
[239] Calò, 2009, p. 2.

The wide distribution of bronze drums thus stands witness to the routes travelled from prehistory to history in Southeast Asia. These elaborate and valuable ceremonial objects were traded as prestige goods embodying notions of socio-political and religious power, thus participating in transactions establishing alliances and marking the growth of centres along trade routes.[240]

An important point made by Calò is that the distribution of kettledrums in Eastern Indonesia followed a separate route in a distinct period, from the third to the 5th century (CE). There they entered inter-island trade networks and may have been in circulation into the early second millennium.[241] One of 27 known instances of Dong Son bronze drums in Eastern Indonesia was found in the Bird´s Head of Alor in the 1970s.[242] Eventually the bronze drums gave rise to a local tradition of metal casting centred on Bali and Java in a period of Indianization of religion and culture. This in a later stage led to the production of the *moko* bronze and brass drums so important to Alor culture.[243]

Ill 6. Zakarias Soleman Waluba in Maumana on the south coast, playing a moko *drum. Photo: Emilie Wellfelt*

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[240] Calò, 2009, p. 2.
[241] Calò, 2009, p.112.
[242] Calò, 2009, p. 121; 123.
[243] Calò, 2009, p. 129-138; Bernet-Kempers, 1988.

According to Calò the majority of *moko* are dated from the 17th to the 20th century (there still are workshops in Java casting new *moko*). While there is some uncertainty, there might be very early examples from the late first millennium CE. There is no evidence that *moko* were ever used ceremonially in Java or Bali, while they are among prime cultural objects in Alor and surrounding islands where there are no indications of production.[244]

So it seems *moko* were produced in Java (and probably in Makassar) for the Alor area at least from the 17th century. As seen in the historyscapes, *moko* are important objects and also actors in many stories. Interestingly, when sifting through the colonial archives for the period 1600-1850, Hägerdal found no mention of *moko*, while gongs, another imported metal prestige object in Alor, appeared in the records with a first mention in 1702.[245] Hägerdal remarked that 'Unfortunately the *moko* are not documented in the VOC records hitherto found. Most probably they were brought along with the trading vessels together with the gongs'.[246] Another possibility is that *moko* were the result of Alor trade outside the colonial system.

It seems the first mentions of *moko* in European sources only appeared in the second half of the 19th century, and then as 'strange bronze drums'.[247] This coincided with the deeper colonial involvement in Alor following agreements with Portugal in the 1850s that placed Alor more firmly in the Dutch sphere.

In 1918, W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp visited Alor, attracted to the island by the *moko* as art objects and collectibles.[248] Later, Nieuwenkamp reported a currency reform in 1914 during which silver and copper coins of the East Indies currency were introduced in Alor. To get the previous currency, the *moko*, out of the system, payments with *moko* were prohibited. The only exceptions were tax payments and bridewealth according to local custom (*adat*). Reportedly some 1600 *moko* were either disposed of in Kalabahi bay or destroyed and taken to Kupang to be sold as scrap.[249] Controlling *moko* became a step in the 'pacification' that characterized contacts between the colonial power and indigenous peoples in Alor in the first two decades of the 20th century. The campaign might have served to introduce coins, but hardly to reduce the attachment to *moko* in Alor. Du Bois reported from the Abui area in the late 1930s that 'The Alorese prize mokos above everything else' and that the men controlled the Abui financial system with three currencies: 'pigs,

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[244] Calò, 2009, p. 150; 152-156.
[245] Hägerdal, 2010b, p. 224.
[246] Hägerdal, 2010b, p. 231.
[247] Kuhn & Rabus, 2003, p 23.
[248] In the late 19th century, Meulemans, the Dutch administrator in Alor donated a *moko* to the Museum in Batavia [Jakarta] with the following explanation: 'These drums are used as the medium of exchange in the whole subsection Alor-Pantar and in the surrounding islands and form the capital of the coast and mountain population, and is used to pay the bride treasure' (Schmeltz 1902:33, here in Kuhn & Rabus, 2003, p.23).
[249] Bernet-Kempers, 1988, p. 366 with reference to Nieuwenkamp, 1922 and Vatter, 1932.

gongs, and metal kettledrums called mokos'.[250] This fascination continues into the present when *moko* have increasingly entered into the realm of heritage.[251] The latest contribution to the growing *moko* literature is an article by the historian Leonard Andaya.[252] Andaya argues that *moko* (and elephant tusks) became important ritual objects in some Eastern Indonesian societies because they were associated with authority and rain/fertility. According to Andaya the symbolism was 'imported' from India and Southeast Asia together with the objects. To what extent the symbolism had travelled with the trade routes or was the result of indigenous interpretations at the receiving end is disputable.

Returning to Hoskins and Sumba, Hoskins discussed a Chinese urn decorated with dragons and incorporated as a 'history object' in Kodi; in her interpretation the indigenous transformation of symbolism is more explicit:

> *The Chinese dragon, a powerful mythological animal for the urn's creators in South China or mainland Southeast Asia, was transformed for these islanders into a python, the giver of rainfall who sacrificed his own daughter so that the people might have rice. The original meaning in the iconography was lost on the way from China to Sumba, but its reinterpretation reflected the historical conditions that brought it to the island. The imagery of fertility and power was invested with a specific sense of distant sultanates and indirect rule, and aura of remote authority and diminished capacity for action.[253]*

History and heritage

Hoskins' notion of history as heritage, representing continuity, versus history as '*sejarah*', a discontinuous and more individualized history, can be applied to the situation in Alor in the post-Suharto era of decentralization.[254]

The new political and economic importance given to the district level in Indonesia after 2001 sparked an unprecedented interest in officially manifesting Alor district history and heritage.[255]

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[250] Du Bois, 1944, p. 22 and caption to illustration between pages 32-33. According to Du Bois, *moko* were imported from Java by Makassarese traders who exchanged them for goods; the import was stopped 'half a century ago' causing the price of the remaining *moko* to rise. Du Bois (1944, p. 23) also mentions that a government census 'some twenty years ago' had estimated about 20,000 *moko* in Alor.

[251] In 2009 I Made Purna, a researcher from a government institution in Bali (Balai Pelestarian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional Bali, NTB/NTT), published *Moko Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat Alor* (*Moko* in the life of Alor people). The same year staff from the district culture authorities in Kalabahi, Alor, published another *moko* book focusing more on typologies. (Laufa et al. 2009). The district museum in Kalabahi is named *Museum of a thousand moko* (Museum '1000 Moko'). An employee at the museum has written a thesis about conserving the *moko* collection at the district museum (Sina, 2012).

[252] Andaya, 2016.

[253] Hoskins, 1997[1993], p. 139.

[254] Hoskins, 1997[1993], p. 138.

[255] Democratization and decentralization reforms are well covered in Schulte Nordholt & van Klinken (eds.), 2007. For heritage in Alor in the decentralization era, see Wellfelt, 2015. The kind of

This was quite different from the conflicts that broke out in other parts of Indonesia after the fall of the authoritarian Suharto regime. These conflicts tended to have ethnic and religious undertones and received much attention from researchers, while other more 'successful' places (actually most of Indonesia) were left without mention. One exception to this was Henley et al., who examined 'the anatomy of peace' in post-Suharto North Sulawesi.[256]

The history and heritage boom in Alor can in some respects be termed the results of a smoothly functioning anatomy of peace.[257] It was also the result of the continuation of a bureaucratic reign. Another factor was the district head, Ansgerius Takalapeta (1999-2009), who together with his wife Dina Takalapeta had a strong interest in history, heritage, and the support of indigenous craft.

In their time a handful of books with historical content were published, but also separate biographies of both Ansgerius and Dina Takalapeta.[258] The history published primarily concerned the history of the district administration.[259]

Written history was treated with caution. It concerned important people, in urban contexts. Meanwhile a rapidly increasing number of heritage sites, or *obyek situs*, were designated all over Alor.

In the Eastern Indonesian district Alor, a total of 25 places and objects are designated as official heritage sites. As many as 15 out of these 25 sites are houses.[260] This preference for architecture and materiality fits well into Western mainstream ideas of heritage, or the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD). As pointed out by Laurajane Smith, among others, this dominant discourse has emphasized heritage management as the conservation of material heritage.[261]

The principles of conservation are formulated in statements such as the 1931 *Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments* and the Venice Charter from 1964. Smith argues that European ideals about monuments and their preservation have become "internationally naturalized" to the extent that the AHD is perceived as 'common sense'.[262]

However, gradually other heritage concepts, including intangible heritage, have sided with the ruins.[263] In Alor the idea of conservation is challenged by

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nationalistic history that developed under the Suharto era is discussed in Wood, 2005. That history was both a model for district history in Alor, and the kind of history to which the history boom in Alor was a counter reaction.

[256] Henley, Schouten & Ulaen, 2007, p. 307-326.

[257] See Wellfelt, 2007.

[258] I have seen two biographies for Ansgerius Takalapeta, while his wife Dina Takalapeta had one (Lagadoni, 2005).

[259] Adang, 2008; Bell, 2009; Itta, 2008

[260] Ndjurumana (ed.), 2008, p. 54-55.

[261] Smith, 2006, p.25.

[262] Smith, 2006, p.21.

[263] See Smith & Akagawa, 2008.

the practice of tearing down and rebuilding houses when they need restoration. A rebuilt house is made of new building materials, but it is perceived as a continuation of the old (named) house. Permanence lies not in the wood but in the ability to procure wooden pillars and material for thatching (or in recent times cement and sheets of galvanized tin), and most importantly in keeping alive a social network of people prepared to engage in a construction project. Permanence is social rather than material. This also goes for houses made into official heritage sites.[264] In some cases the memory of a house is more important than the house itself. If there is a story and people who remember, the house can always be rebuilt. Stories are stronger than wood.

Ill 7. Rumah adat *Tangwah, near Pureman on the south coast. The house is said to be a reconstruction of a one destroyed by fire in the 17th century. Photo: Emilie Wellfelt*
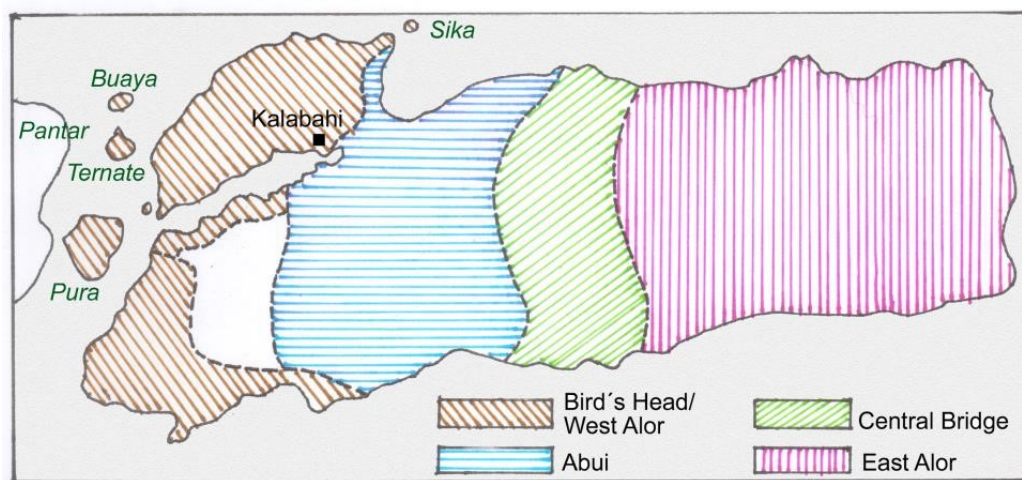
Historyscapes

Reading historyscapes

While the theoretical and methodological background of this study was presented in Chapter 1, Chapters 2-5 introduce the empirical results, the historyscapes in Alor. Chapter 6, the final discussion, includes short summarising examinations of each of the four historyscapes.

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[264] Wellfelt, 2015.

The divisions into the four historyscapes are based on the way in which I found that indigenous histories seemed to connect places and peoples. In some cases the historyscape is sub-divided into parts. People in Alor do not speak of historyscapes or claim to belong to one; instead the divisions are the result of analysing how people in Alor orient themselves through narratives about their own history (see map below).

I chose to work my way through the stories from East to West, while the common reading in a western context would have been from West to East. The reason for this was that I wanted to begin away from the immediate vicinity of Kalabahi, which is the urban centre of Alor and also the area where the colonial presence in the first half of the 20th century had an immediate impact.

Ill 8. The island of Alor with the four historyscapes. Map: Lennart Hildingsson

In each historyscape the groups of people that make up the historyscape are introduced. The basis for being a 'group' varies, depending on what people in the area treat as a historically significant unit. This might for instance be a lineage, or speakers of a language, or a cluster of villages. People of course have different allegiances and might feel they belong to several groups, but I have tried to identify and present the groups relevant to the kind of subject matter I am presenting here, which is history involving different groups in a region.

In the first part of each historyscape key stories from each group are presented in an order reflecting what stories seemed most important to the respective group. The stories in the chapters are my interpretations of indigenous narrations; sometimes they are based on several meetings or narrations by the same source. In the references each story I am drawing from is named in a manner showing the area it comes from, the language of the group, and a number. The stories referred to in this manner are listed in

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appendix A, where I also provide metadata about the narrator and the context where the stories were told.

In appendix B interviews are listed by date. I use both kinds of references, stories in appendix A and interviews in appendix B, for oral sources.

The second part of each historyscape is a chronological reading of indigenous histories in each historyscape. In those readings I also employ other source materials. When doing this I have chosen to keep an Alor-centric perspective. Connecting indigenous histories to other sources, mainly the colonial archive and secondary literature, tends to render a stronger focus on elites and on history as seen from coastal settlements.

My experience was that chronological readings of stories were quite different from the more place-oriented first readings. The key stories from the groups emphasise spatial understandings of history. In the chronological reading of the material events and individuals become more prominent. Another consequence of a chronological reading-mode is an emphasis on change rather than continuity. This focus on events and change contains an element of jeopardy to some groups as what had been seen as permanent truth might be open to challenge.

A time-based mode of interpretation invites periodization. I have suggested some periods in each historyscape, based both on indigenous history and on a general knowledge of (colonial) history in the area. The periods are tentative and negotiable depending on what kind of study you are making.

As the temporality aspect is not a key feature in indigenous history in Alor, it takes some persuasion before such sources can be coerced into a timeline, though to a certain extent it is possible. While the chronological form is closer to 'academic history' than the presentation of key stories in the first part of each chapter, the primary task is not to prove what happened but to identify what surfaces in the fluid memory of orality. That is similar to the priorities in a historical sub-discipline, mnemohistory, described by Jan Assman in the following:

> *…[F]or a historian of memory, the "truth" of a given memory lies not so much in its "factuality" as in its "actuality". Events tend to be forgotten unless they live on in collective memory […]. The reason for this "living on" lies in the continuous relevance of these events. This relevance comes not from their historical past, but from an ever-changing present in which these events are remembered as facts of importance."*[265]

Before the chronological sketches presented in the historyscapes could qualify as 'academic history' they would need to be further examined. Rather than being the history of Alor the chronologies in the historyscapes point to

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[265] Assman 1998[1997], p.9-10

crucial periods and problems experienced by people in Alor. Comparing the chronologies, one observation which can be made is that historical experiences sometimes vary considerably within short distances.

Ill. 9. All night lego-lego dances are an important feature in Alor culture and social life. The photo is taken in Batulolong (Bird´s Head-West Alor historyscape) just after dawn at the celebration of the maize harvest in 2010. Photo: Emilie Wellfelt