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An etymology for Galiyao

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Over the years several attempts have been made to identify the place referred to in historical documents as “Galiyao” and to attribute a plausible etymology to that term. The name Galiyao itself has a long history. It appears already in the 14th century Nāgara-Kĕrtāgama among a list of Majapahit dependencies, and by the 16th century it is located on a map as Galiau. A century later the name appears again as Gallejau in a letter written by the commander of the Dutch siege of the Portuguese position in Solor (Tiele 1886, quoted in van Fraassen 1976).¹ Over the ensuing centuries the name fades from the written record, but Le Roux (1929) nonetheless convincingly identifies Galiyao with the island presently known as Pantar, located between Alor and Lembata at approximately 8 degrees south latitude and 124 degrees east longitude in Nusa Tenggara Timur. Any remaining doubt is put to rest by Barnes (1982), who carefully distinguishes Pantar from Lembata. This is a crucial point, for a key piece of evidence locating Galiyao is Pigafetta’s 1522 map of three large islands labelled Zolot, Galiau, and Mallua. The latter is well established as a reference to Alor (Vatter 1932), while the former is clearly Solor, preserving what is likely a more correct or original final consonant (compare the language name Lamaholot). But as Barnes points out, there are two large islands between Solor and Alor, namely Lembata and Pantar. Barnes’ insight is to notice that owing to the oblique trend of the narrow strait separating Lembata and Pantar, it would be difficult to recognize the two as distinct islands as viewed from the north coast.

However, while the geographical location of Galiyao has been established beyond doubt, the ultimate etymological source of the word has remained something of a mystery. Le Roux (1929) identified the region of Kayang on west coast of Pantar as the source of the name Galiyao, apparently relying on the sound correspondence between the initial velar stops and the medial glide. This etymology is suspect on phonological grounds for at least two reasons. First, it fails to account for the presence of the lateral consonant in Galiyao. Second, it equates a consonantal glide in syllable onset position with a medial glide, the latter of which could just as well be interpreted as the phonetic representation of the transition between two neighbouring vowels. Beyond these simple issues of sound correspondence, it is not clear how a term referring to this particular region would come to denote the entire island Pantar.

As far as I am aware, the first attempt at a morphological analysis of Galiyao is found in Rodemeier (2006:246), who transcribes Galiyao as two words, *gali au*. Rodemeier notes that none of her consultants in Tanjung Muna on the northern tip of Pantar could explain the meaning of the word *gali*. In other words, the residents of Tanjung Muna are aware that the term Galiyao is actually decomposable into two distinct meaningful parts, but the meanings of the individual parts are obscure to them. This is a significant point which merits further examination, but before continuing it is useful to take a brief excursion into the linguistic geography of Pantar Island.

¹ Incidentally, this event, which inspired a simultaneous indigenous uprising against the Portuguese, is still celebrated in Western Pantar oral histories.

Some half a dozen linguistic varieties are spoken indigenously on Pantar.² All but one of these varieties belong to the non-Austronesian Alor-Pantar family, which includes members on neighbouring Alor and on the intervening islands in the Pantar Strait. The remaining language, Alorese, is an Austronesian language which is spoken in a variety of dialects in three primary regions of Pantar: the northern tip, variously referred to as Tanjung Muna or Pandai; the area of Baranusa and its immediate environs; and the western village of Kayang and neighbouring Kangge Island. While speakers sometimes make finer distinctions, these varieties are all mutually intelligible with each other and with the variety of Alorese spoken on Alor. The geographic distribution of the Alorese language on Pantar Island (and indeed on Alor itself) reflects the strong maritime commercial culture of Alorese speakers. The three Alorese regions mentioned above are strategically significant for maritime trade. The Kangge region guards the Alor Strait, regulating trade between Lembata and Pantar, including a formerly active slave with Kedang (Barnes 1974). Baranusa is the location of the only protected natural harbour on the island. Finally, Tanjung Muna is located strategically at the head of the notoriously tumultuous Pantar Strait, guarding trade between Alor and Pantar. To this day Alorese speakers continue to look toward the sea for their livelihood, engaging in inshore and pelagic fishing and maritime trade. In this respect Alorese economy differs significantly from that of the non-Austronesian speakers on Pantar. While some non-Austronesian languages are today spoken in coastal areas, fishing is generally limited to near shore subsistence activities rather than the large scale commercial activities typical of Alorese speakers. This likely reflects a relatively recent migration of non-Austronesian speakers to coastal areas. Indeed, modern large coastal villages such as Puntaru and Alimakke were settled only in the 1950's and 1960's, and residents still identify strongly with ancestral villages located in the mountains, away from the coast. In such recently-settled coastal villages farming, not fishing, remains the dominant economic activity. In contrast, the Alorese speakers of nearby Kangge rely almost entirely on fishing for their livelihood. Rather than growing their own grain, they trade dried fish products for rice with their non-Austronesian speaking neighbours. To paint things with a broad brush, Alorese speakers form a maritime culture, while non-Austronesian economy is based on (subsistence) agriculture.

Given this socio-linguistic background we can surmise that initial contacts between outsiders and residents of Pantar took place with Alorese speakers rather than with speakers of non-Austronesian languages. Europeans visiting the region by sailing ship would naturally make contact with the maritime Alorese speakers, perhaps not even venturing forth into the interior mountains. If Galiyao were of Alorese origin, it is unlikely that these Alorese speakers would have been unfamiliar with its meaning. But there is another possibility, namely that these early recorded contacts were with Alorese speakers for whom Galiyao was not a native term. In that case early contact records would not be the best place to look for insights as to etymologies.

Returning now to the term *gali au* recorded in modern times by Rodemeier (2006), the fact that Alorese speakers of Tanjung Muna are able to segment the term but not able to assign meaning to the individual parts suggests that the terms *gali* and *au* are not of Alorese origin. Instead, Rodemeier suggests an origin for the first of these terms in the south Pantar language "Lama," that is, Lamma (also known as Western Pantar). She cites a speaker of Lamma as identifying *gali* with the Lamma term for 'earth' or 'earth spirit' (German *Erde* or *Erdgeist*). The same speaker was unable to identify the second term *au*. Rodemeier goes on to

² In addition to these indigenous languages, a small group of Bajau speakers have migrated recently to an area just north of Kabir, on the west side of the northeast peninsula of the island. Also, Alor Malay is spoken widely as a second language across the island.

speculate that *au* may be identified with an Alorese term referring to a particular kind of bamboo, but it is difficult to imagine the semantic context in which this term would apply to the island of Pantar, the ultimate referent of Galiyao. Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine why the term Galiyao would be composed of two words from different language sources. A more likely explanation is that *au* too has its source in the Western Pantar language, but that source was not immediately evident to Rodemeier's consultant. I propose here that the word transcribed by Rodemeier as *au* has its source in Western Pantar *awa* 'living, alive.'

One of the difficulties with identifying the source of the term Galiyao has been the almost complete lack of extant documentation for the local languages of Pantar until very recently. However, we now have decent documentation for two of the non-Austronesian languages, Teiwa and Lamma (Western Pantar). A term corresponding to Galiyao is recorded unambiguously as the name for Pantar Island in both of these languages. In Teiwa the term is *Galiyawa* (Klamer 2010); in Western Pantar the term is *Gale Awa* (Holton & Lamma Koly 2008). At least in Western Pantar this term is not at all obscure. In fact, when I began fieldwork with the Western Pantar language in 2004 I was unaware of the academic controversy regarding the name Galiyao. In the process of documenting local toponyms I recorded the name *Gale Awa* for Pantar Island. The generic term *kukka* 'mountain, island' was sometimes appended to yield *Gale Awa Kukka*, but this additional generic can be readily seen to be innovative, presumably a calque of the local Malay pattern which assigns the generic *gunung* 'mountain' and *pulau* 'island' in place names. The redundancy of this innovative usage can be seen when *kukka* is used with place names which already contain a partially polysemous generic term. For example, the name *Was Bila*, literally 'sun ridge', refers to the large peak on the west end of Pantar. One sometimes hears this peak referred to alternatively as *Was Bila Kukka*, where the addition of *kukka* is innovative. Furthermore, Western Pantar toponyms generally lack a generic component and are usually exophoric (Holton to appear). In any case, the main point is that *Gale Awa* is generally accepted by Western Pantar speakers as the name for Pantar Island, though the increasing dominance of Malay renders the name *Gale Awa* somewhat archaic. In everyday speech *Gale Awa* has given over to *Pantar*, and it is less familiar to younger speakers, who are more familiar with Malay and just as likely to use modern Malay toponyms. But the name *Gale Awa* is far from obscure: there was no hesitation or disagreement when I elicited the term.

Moreover, the etymology of *Gale Awa* is patently clear. The first word *gale* refers to the physical shape or figure or body. In typical usage the term refers to the human body, as in *gale tabba akku* '[he has] a very good body'. The word *awa* means 'living, breathing'. Putting these two together we get *Gale Awa*, literally 'living body'. The appropriateness of this name is evidenced by the presence of an active volcano which dominates southern Pantar. This volcano regularly erupts, often raining ash and pyroclastic flows onto villages of the region. Even when it is not erupting, the volcano ominously vents sulphur gas and smoke from its crater. In a very real sense, the island with its continuously seething volcano is a living body.

In order to conclusively connect *Gale Awa* with Rodemeier's *gali au*, it is necessary to assess the phonetic correspondences between the two transcriptions. The distinction between *gale* and *gali* is likely to reflect a difference in orthographic conventions rather than semantics. I have not recorded any Western Pantar word *gali*, nor are any Western Pantar words meaning 'earth' at all similar in pronunciation (Holton & Lamma Koly 2008). It is more likely that the abstract Western Pantar term *gale* was glossed by Rodemeier's consultant as 'earth' in order to provide a more concrete translation. The alternate gloss 'earth spirit' also suggests the more abstract sense of Western Pantar *gale*. Note also that Dietrich's (1984) transcription *Galéau* is consistent with the spelling *gale*.

This leaves us with the equation of Western Pantar *awa* with Rodemeier's *au*. Both forms are presumably disyllabic, and it could be easily argued that these are simply alternate transcriptions of the same word, one containing a glide and one containing a diphthong. Here the common transcription Galiyao is informative. The use of the letter y suggests the presence of a glide quality, which might just as likely be a labio-velar w as a palatal. And the use of mid vowel rather than the high back vowel suggests that the target of the vowel transition is lower than that represented by au, which contains a high vowel. Furthermore, the stress on the word *awa* is on the first syllable, with the second syllable only lightly enunciated. Hence, it is not unimaginable that *awa* could be transcribed *au*. Like all languages of the region, Western Pantar lacks a standardized orthography (other than that proposed recently by Holton and Lamma Koly 2008), so some variation in orthographic conventions is to be expected.

In an early publication Rodemeier concluded that "...Galiyao was not a single entity but an alliance of several coastal regions" (1995:442). While this statement may well be true of the expanded alliance name Galiyao Watan Lema, evidence from the indigenous languages of Pantar clearly support an indigenous origin for the name Galiyao itself. Galiyao, or more properly Gale Awa, is the Western Pantar name for Pantar Island, and it is the Western Pantar language which provides the source of this once mysterious name.

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