SYARIFUDDIN R. GOMANG

Muslim and Christian alliances

'Familial relationships' between inland and coastal peoples of the Belagar community in eastern Indonesia

In recent years Indonesia has been experiencing extensive religious and ethnic conflict.[1] Until recently such conflict has been limited in eastern Indonesia by ties between communities that are modelled on family relationships. Although these institutions have broken down recently in the Moluccas, they are still effective on the islands of Pantar and Alor, in Nusa Tenggara Timur, in maintaining peace between Muslims and Christians.

In the Belagar community of Pantar, the focus of this article, the relationship between Christians of the interior and Muslims of the coast is secured by a tie of brotherhood (*ia mutu lol 'tela wala*). People of the neighbouring island of Alor express the same relationship as *kakari woto watang,* 'brotherhood between inland and coastal peoples' (Gomang 1993:50-1). The same relationship is expressed in the non-Austronesian Belagar language as *serang* and in the Bahasa Alor of the coastal communities of western Alor as *eneng*, both meaning 'friend'. Both languages also use the expression *bela baja,* or 'big oath'. People allied in this way promise to avoid conflict among themselves.

The *bela baja* relationship is known not only in Alor and Belagar communities, but also in many other eastern Indonesia peoples, including those of the Lamaholot-speaking group. People of Kedang use the related expression *bela bayan* (Barnes 2001:292), and people in Maluku Province call it *pela gandong*.[2] Before 1994, it was believed that political stabilization and harmonious relationships between people from different religious and ethnic groups in eastern Indonesian communities was due to the existence of such relationships (*pela*

[1] See, for example, the essays in Wessel and Wimhöfer 2001; Hüsken and De Jonge 2002; Coppel 2006.

[2] Bartels (1977:28-31, 181-90, 222-5; 1980) lists three kinds of *pela*, the hard *pela*, the *pela* of the uterus, and the betel-box *pela*.

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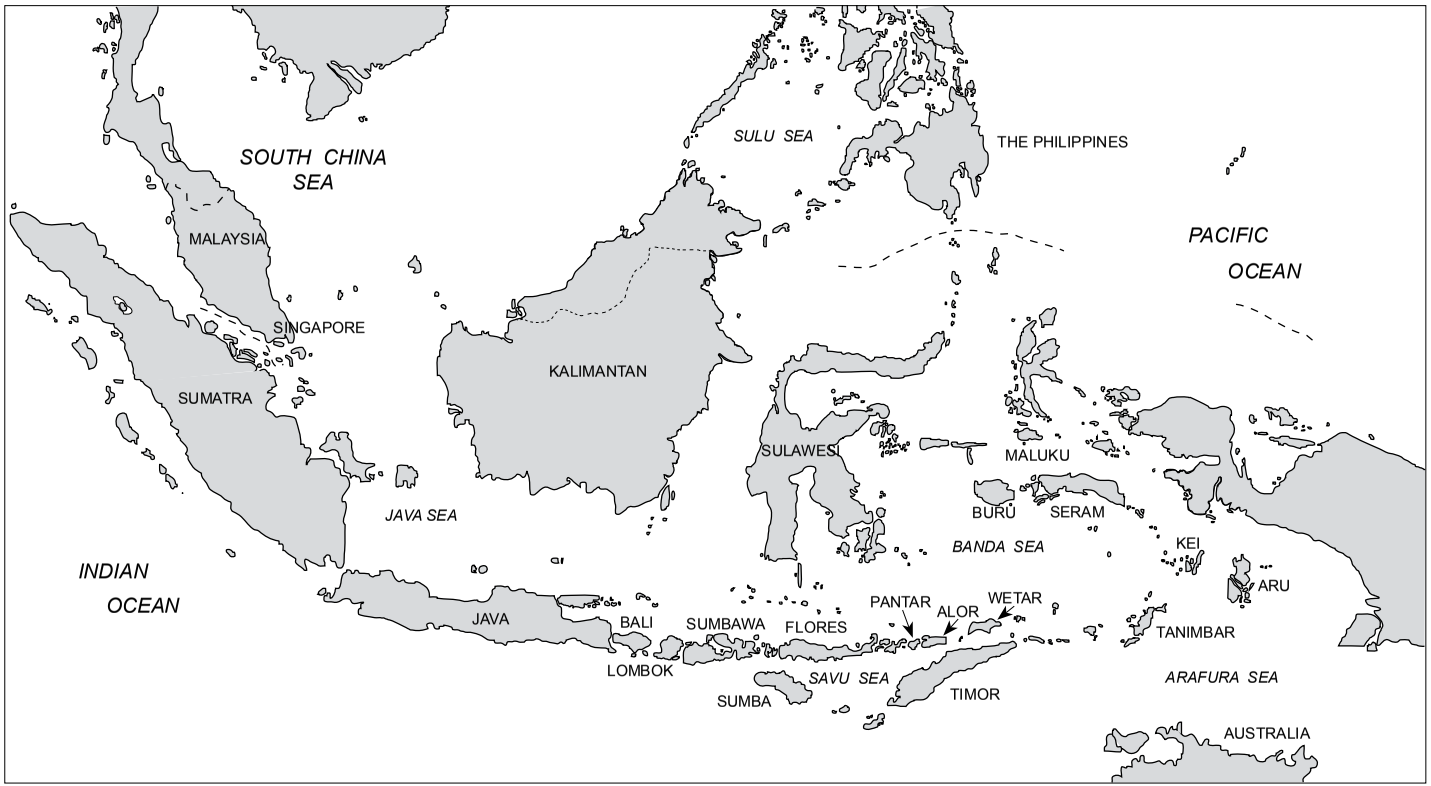
gandong, bela baja, serang, eneng, reu and many other names in various local languages). However, after 1994, the situation changed very rapidly. Religious and ethnic conflict occurred throughout Indonesia. In Maluku Province religious conflict between Christians and Muslims erupted in 1999 and subsequently. There have been many attempts to end these conflicts, for example under the Malino Agreement II signed in February 2002, and for the Poso community of Sulawesi an agreement signed a month earlier.[3] In Kalimantan, ethnic conflict took place between local people (Melayu and Dayak) and settlers from Madura, who have been living there for many years.

In East Nusa Tenggara Province itself (where the Belagar community is located), there has been similar conflict in many places. To the west, on the island of Flores, ethnic and religious conflict occurred in almost all *kabupaten* (regencies) after 1995, and as recently as September 2002 in Maumere, the capital of the regency of Sika (central Flores). To the east, on the island of Alor, ethnic conflict took place occasionally in Kalabahi, the city of Alor regency, most recently in February 2003. Further to the east, in the Southeast Maluku islands, religious conflict took place in Tual and nearby islands. To the south, on Timor, there was also conflict in all *kabupaten* between 1995 and 1998. Much the same occurred on the island of Sumba (see Map 1). Belagar, Pantar, seems to be an unusual community in its avoidance of such conflict.

What is the nature of the familial relationship between inland and coastal peoples of Belagar, and how has this relationship withstood the winds of religious divisiveness that swept through eastern Indonesia? In this article I hope to demonstrate that the Belagarese familial relationship between inland and coastal peoples remains intact, whereas it has been argued that similar institutions in the Moluccas have been weakened by government policies, immigration, land loss, and other factors not especially relevant to Pantar (Bartels 1977:330, 2002; Frost 2004:2-5). Following a brief comparison of this Belagarese institution with similar practices in nearby communities, I present three cases studies from my 1999 fieldwork to illustrate the cohesive significance of this institution and its role in preventing religious and ethnic conflict within the Belagar community.[4]

[3] See, for example, Hefner 2000:106-8, 190-3; Bubandt 2000, 2001, 2004; Bartels 2002; Frost 2004.

[4] I was sponsored by the Asia Development Bank (ADB) in Jakarta, via Lembaga Penelitian Universitas Nusa Cendana (Research Institution of Nusa Cendana University) in Kupang to carry out the research on which this article is based. Fieldwork was conducted between February 1999 and November 1999. During this period the social situation in East Nusa Tenggara Province was very sensitive in respect of ethnic and religious issues due to turmoil produced by religious tensions in Kupang, the capital city of East Nusa Tenggara Province, on 30 November 1998. In Maluku, conflict between Christians and Muslims did not take place until 19 January 1999. Since the situation was very sensitive, it was very difficult to get permission at local government or provincial level for research on religious and ethnic issues. The title of the research was thus formulated as: Dampak Mekanisasi Angkutan Laut Terhadap Hubungan Kekerabatan Antara Pen-



Map 1. Indonesia

The Belagar community

Belagar is situated in eastern Pantar. Belagarese are either Muslims or Christians (Protestants). Belagarese Muslims live in five main villages, Kolijahi, Bakalang, Tuabang and Nuhawala (on Pantar), and Tereweng (on the tiny island of Tereweng). Since all of these villages are situated on the shore, they call themselves, and are called by their neighbours in the interior of Belagar, *tang wala* (people of the sea) and *lol wala* (people of the coast). Christian villages of Belagar include the inland settlements of Bukalabang, Berimau, Uawalangdolu, Bari, and Tuntuli, and the coastal villages of Malagulelang, Doliwang, Manatang, Warsalelang, and Erewasing. All Christian Belagarese, whether they live on the coast or inland, call themselves and are called by Muslim Belagarese *'tela wala* (people of the interior). Locally, *tang wala* and *lol wala* are understood to refer to Muslims and *'tela wala* to Christians. Even the Christians who go fishing and sailing like the Belagarese Muslims call themselves *'tela wala*.

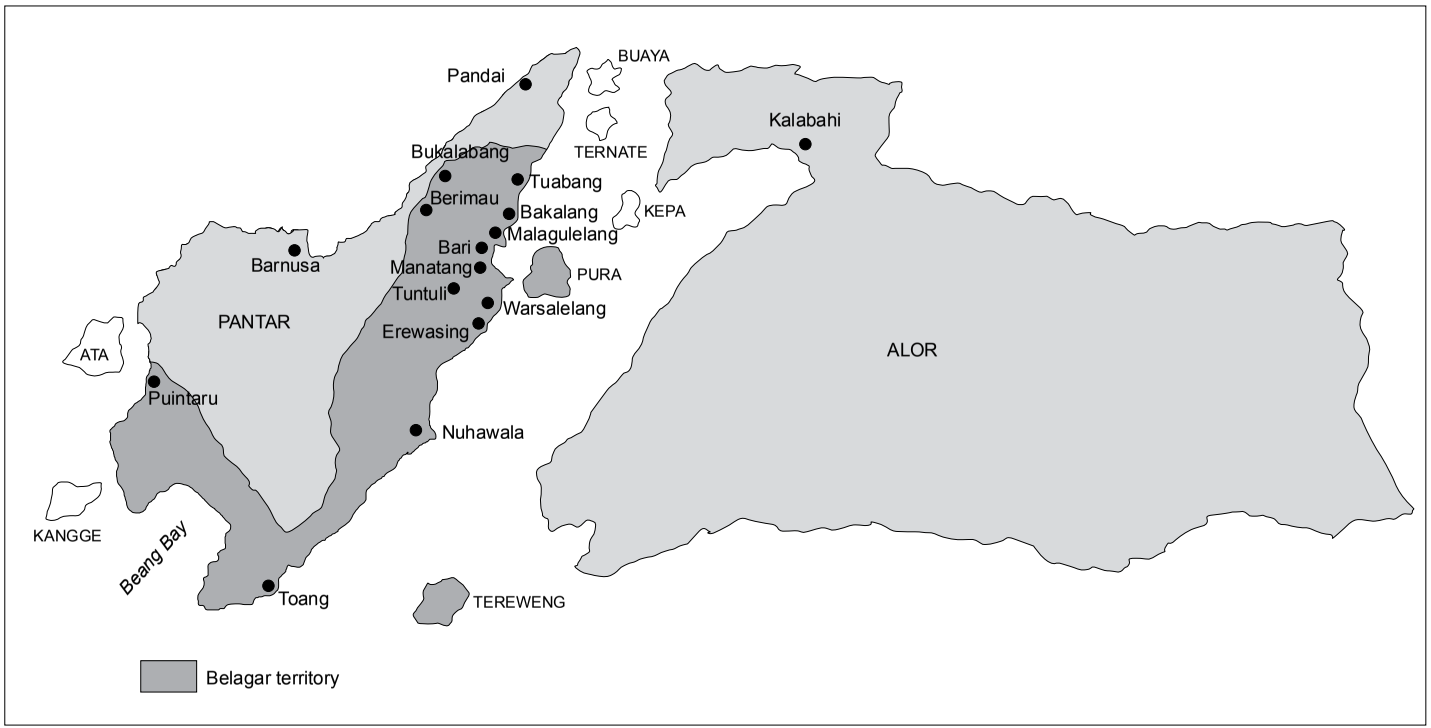
This local understanding appears to conform to the link posited by Pigeaud and De Graaf (1976) between *pesisir* (coastal) communities and Islam. This claim has been challenged by Vickers.[5] In conformity with Pigeaud and De Graaf's position, the familial relationship between inland and coastal peoples referred to in the title of this article is to be understood as a relationship between local Christians and local Muslims.

According to *Buku-buku monografi desa tahun* 1998 (annual village reports for 1998), available in village heads' offices, the population of the five main Muslim villages totals 4,270, and the population of the ten Christian villages amounts to 1,678. The largest Muslim village is Kolijahi (1,879 people). Although Bakalang is the capital of Belagar, it is only the second largest village, at 821 people, the same figure as Tereweng, followed by Nuhawala and Tuabang, with 570 and 180 people respectively. The Belagarese Christian villages, from the largest to the smallest, are Warsalelang (304), Manatang (249), Doliwang (204), Tuntuli (184), Bukalabang (165), Berimau (120), Erewasing (102), Malagulelang, (86) Uawalangdolu (84), and Bari (80).

Both inland and coastal Belagarese are farmers, practising slash-and-burn agriculture and growing maize, rice, and cassava. Occasionally their harvest is insufficient because of lack of rain. People in the interior plant candlenut trees (*Alorica montana*), areca palms, and betel-pepper plants, and gather products from their limited forests. Coastal people, especially males, fish and sail for trade. These divergent activities make the two communities economi-

duduk Pesisir dan Pedalaman di Pantar Timur Kecamatan Pantar, Kabupaten Alor (The Impact of the Mechanization of Sea Transportation on the Familial Relationship Between the Peoples of Coastal and Inland Regions of Eastern Pantar, Subregion of Pantar, Regency of Alor).

5 Vickers 1987, 1993; see Barnes 1995:497, 1996b:1, 377 note 1.



Map 2. Alor-Pantar Islands

cally interdependent. Products from the interior are transported on sailing vessels owned by coastal people to be sold in Kalabahi. The basis for this mutual dependence is the *serang* relationship. Since 1973, however, circumstances have changed. Motorboats owned by Chinese traders in Kalabahi have replaced traditional sailing vessels. Also, the government established a monopoly for the purchase of candlenut and forest products for the *koperasi unit desa* (village-level cooperation unit), thereby disrupting the economic interdependency between inland and coastal peoples, but not their sense of family ties with each other (Gomang 1999).

Unlike inland women, coastal women in Belagar traditionally make pots and weave. Pottery is produced only in the largest village of Kolijahi, but has now almost ceased to be made because of recent abundant availability of modern commercial products. Today, pottery making has been replaced by the manufacture of bricks. Before 1970, local pottery was carried by sailing vessels to Solor, Lembata and Adonara, where it was bartered for hand-woven cloth, maize, cassava, and other products. Through these trading contacts, Belagarese established relationships of friendship (*serang)* with Lamaholot-speaking peoples in the East Flores regency. The Lamaholot regard Belagarese as *reu* ('friends').

Coastal Belagarese also produce salt (by boiling seawater) and lime (by calcining coral), which they barter at traditional marketplaces for areca nuts and betel peppers supplied by inland people. Areca nuts, betel peppers, lime, and salt are symbols of interdependence between inland and coastal peoples. They say that one cannot chew areca nuts and betel peppers alone, lime is also required, just as one does not stand apart from one's family relationships. A customary law *(adat*) phrase puts it thus: 'ning tang wala ainga sia-awar jaga, ing ' tela wala ainga bu-mat jaga. Bu-mat enang koang se jadi ba niang, sia-awar enang koang di jadi ba niang' (we coastal people guard salt and lime, you inland people guard betel peppers and areca nuts; betel peppers and areca nuts by themselves are useless, just as salt and lime alone are useless). This saying implies that we are mutually dependent, and neither you nor we can survive without each other's friendship and support.

Belagar as an ethnic group is mentioned, if only in passing, in several written sources. A letter of 1682 sent by the raja of Buton to the governor general of the Dutch East India Company mentions Belagar (Dietrich 1984:319). Vatter (1932:277), Bouman (1943:484), and Stokhof (1984:107-9) refer to Belagar as the name of a group of dialects spoken by people who live in the eastern part of Pantar and on the islands of Pura and Tereweng. Gomang (1993), Rodemeier (1995:441), and Barnes (2001:277-90) list Belagar as a member of the Galiyao Watang Lema alliance. Van Lynden (1851:335) specifies Belagar as a *regentschap* (kingdom*).* His list of villages in the kingdom is incorrect, however, as names such as Karikloeman (Karikluma), Todaisch

(Todaise), and Hoekoemeloe (Humual) are actually names of clans. Van Lynden omits principal villages such as Kolijahi, Tuabang and Bakalang, the capital where Raja Kei Bara (whom Van Lynden does list as Radja Kai Barat) lived. However, published information about Belagar is still sadly limited.

In Indonesian, the people of Belagar call their mother tongue Bahasa Belagar. Speakers of the same language on the island of Pura do not use this expression, although those on Tereweng do. The people of Pura call themselves *ning anga Malar* (we are the people of Pura). The Belagar language may be divided into three dialects: Pura, Belagar Pesisir (Coastal Belagar), and Belagar Pedalaman (Inland Belagar).

Familial relationship between inland and coastal peoples

The ties of brotherhood linking inland and coastal Belagarese are not based on genealogical connections. People from both types of village claim that they have different ancestors and came from different places. After living close to each other for many years and facing many difficulties, they established for their mutual benefit the local institution of *ia mutu lol 'tela wala* (brotherhood between inland and coastal villages). Brotherhood is established through *serang* ties between individuals and *bela baja* ties between clans, villages, and regions.

Serang

Serang in Bahasa Belagar means 'friend' or 'partner'. A *serang* relationship may arise through frequent meeting at the market. The relationship becomes similar to that between family members. If someone needs something brought to market by a *serang* partner, he or she agrees to take it without bargaining, just as one does not bargain with members of one's family. However, each party to the relationship knows how much compensation is appropriate, although the price is usually reduced. S*erang* partners are important for security. A trader often needs to travel to markets in other villages, but food is not sold in villages, nor are there rooms for rent. Thus, while in a strange village, a trader needs a *serang* partner to provide hospitality. In a closed community where outsiders are viewed with suspicion, a *serang* partner will also provide safety. *Serang* ties are one among various means by which Belagarese and members of other ethnic groups established alliances. The *serang* relationship is based on the principle of 'generalized reciprocity'.

S*erang* status is comparable to *ia mutu* (younger brother – elder brother) status in that it has much the same consequences as shared patrilineal descent. Wives should be sought from clans with which the suitor has no *serang* ties, because women of *serang* related clans are regarded as sisters. Although the *serang* relationship begins between two individuals, it extends to the family,

clan, and *adat* house of the partner; so that one becomes in effect a member of that family, clan, and *adat* house. Inland people coming to a coastal village know which *adat* house they should stay in and vice versa. Table 1 shows the relationships between (Christian) clans in the some nearby inland villages and (Muslim) clans of Kolijahi.

Table 1. Familial relationships between clans in inland villages (Christian) with clans in Kolijahi (Muslim)

Name of inland village	Clans in inland village	Relationship with clans in Kolijahi village
Manatang	1. Matawaga	Manu Lalung
	2. Ma Mutu	Mur Lelang and Manu Lalung
	3. Ma Ika	Bamou
	4. Marang Dili	Bamou
	5. Manatang	Olijahi
Tuntuli	6. Mandola	Mur Lelang and Bamou
	7. Igal Dolu	Bamou
	8. Mat Iwang Ma	Bamou
	9. War Biti	Kabaku Wala
	10. Amung Utang	Manu Lalung
Warsalelang	11. Kalambasi Ma	Bamou and Todaise
	12. Sari Ma	Manu Lalung
	13. Maubuling	Olijahi
	14. Ere Wasing	Bamou and Olijahi
	15. Uruwed Ma	Bamou
	16. Watigong Ma	Manu Lalung
Bari	17. Suku Raja	Mur Lelang
	18. Suku Ele	Manu Lalung
	19. Numu Lelang	Numu Lelang and Olijahi
	20. Kalelang	Bamou
Melagu Lelang	21. Wenar	Olijahi
	22. Melagu Lelang	Mur Lelang
	23. Lakmau	Bamou

The familial relationships listed in Table 1 are based mostly on *serang* friendship, perceived as *ia mutu*. The inland clans of column 2 are *ia-mutu* to the Kolijahi clans listed in column 3. Thus, the Mandola clan of Tuntuli village is *ia mutu* to the Bamou and Murlelang clans of Kolijahi village. A man from the Mandola clan in Tuntuli, therefore, is ideally not allowed to marry a woman from the Bamou or Murlelang clan in Kolijahi or even a woman from a clan such as Manu Lalung, such clans being grouped as *ia mutu* to Bamou and Mur Lelang. Instead he should look for a woman from a clan which is not his *ia mutu,* such as Numu Lelang, Olijahi, and Todaise. Members of clans

of inland villages which are *ia mutu* to Numulelang, Olijahi and Todaise of Kolijahi ideally are not allowed to marry into these clans, but instead men of these clans should look for women from the Bamou, Mur Lelang, and Manu Lalung clans.

In the Belagar community, in respect of marriage, all clans are grouped as *ia mutu* (siblings) and *tibiang wal* (mutual affines) to each other. People from different clans, but related as *ia mutu,* ideally are not allowed to marry. A wife should be taken from a *tibiang wal* clan. *Ia mutu* means 'younger brother – elder brother' traced patrilineally, while *tibiang wal* indicates alliance through marriage between FZS (w.s.)/MBS (w.s) and FZD (m.s.)/MBD (m.s.). The system is based on symmetric cross-cousin marriage.

Serang partners tied by an *ia mutu* relationship help each other at all times. When an *adat* (customary ritual) house is built, or at weddings and funerals, *serang* partners are expected to attend and help. Such a partner from an inland village will bring areca nuts and betel peppers, but in fact these objects are just symbols of the relationship. Actually, such partners bring other goods needed for the occasion, such as goats, rice, and fish. They say *nini bu mat ahera* (we bring down areca nuts and betel peppers) or *nini sia awar ada* (we bring up salt and lime). They contribute these supplies because they regard themselves as members of the host group. A *serang* partner regards the building of an *adat* house, for example, as the construction of a shared building for which he has an obligation to contribute. In *adat* terminology, an inland *serang* partner regards an *adat* house in a coastal village as *umat tahing, sei latang e mna*, 'a place to lean his bow and to put down his arrows'. A coastal *serang* partner regards an *adat* house in an inland village as *e hopang mna, e mnarek mn*a, meaning 'a place to take a deep breath and rest' (after climbing into the hills before continuing the journey to trade in other inland villages). Actually, trade into the interior has almost ceased, since now all village markets are on the coast, but partners continue to visit each other, especially for family festivals; and allies still regard *adat* houses as common property.

An *adat* house in Kolijahi may have relationships with more than one *adat* house in the same inland village. For example, Hatang Hawa has a relationship with both Mandola and Ma Ika of Tuntuli. This situation is possible because an *adat* house may be divided into separate *lup mutu* ('eldest son's bedroom') and *lup ia* ('youngest son's bedroom'). Members of each 'bedroom' may have their own *serang* partners. In this way it is possible for different clans in the same inland village to have a relationship with the same *adat* house in a coastal village. The structure of a Belagarese village is shown in Figure 1.

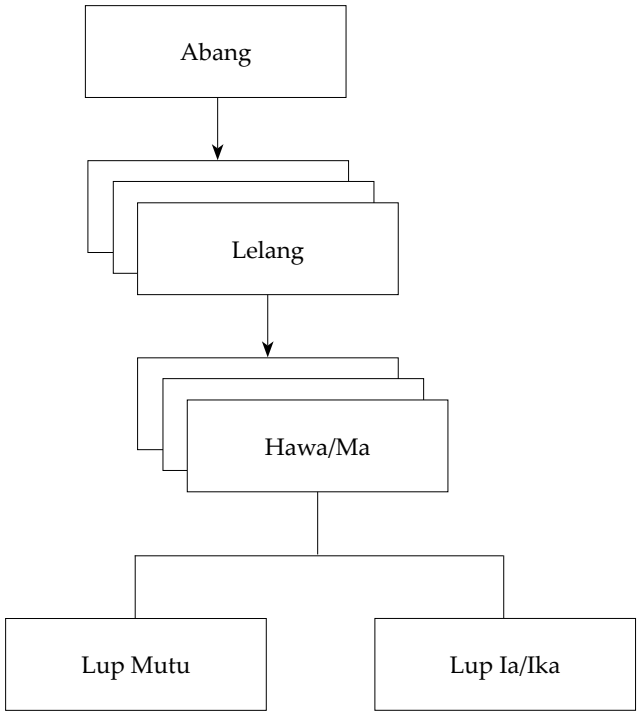
Table 2 shows the relationships between *adat* houses in Kolijahi and *adat* houses in some nearby inland villages.

Table 2. Clans and adat houses of Kolijahi in relation to *adat* houses in inland villages[1]

Name of clans and *adat* houses	Relationship to *adat* houses in inland villages
Bamou Lelang	
1. Le Hawa	1a. Mat Iwang Ma of Tuntuli village
	b. Uruwed Ma of Warsalelang villag
2. Niluorang Hawa	2a. Mandola of Tuntuli village
	b. Ma Ika of Manatang village
3. Lakatuli Hawa	3. Igal Dolu of Tuntuli village
4. Hukung Hawa	4. Watigong Ma of Tuntuli village
Olijahi Lelang	
1. Kirjasi Hawa	1. Wenar of Malagulelang village
2. Bita Koli Hawa	2. Manatang of Manatang village
3. Kelaweng Hawa	3. Mau Buling of Warsalelang village
4. Muldopal Hawa	4. Ere Wasing of Warsalelang village
5. Tarandolu Hawa	5. Tuan Dolu in Inland Pandai district
Manulalung Lelang	
1. Manu Lalung Hawa	1a. Mata Waga of Manatang village
	b. Amung Utang of Tuntuli village
2. Lebe Hawa	2a. Ma Mutu of Manatang village
	b. Ma Ele of Bari village
3. Tubel Hawa	3. Suku Tubal of west Pantar
Murlelang	
1. Kepala Hawa	1. Suku Raja of Bari village
2. Hatang Hawa	2a. Malagu Lelang of Malagulelang village
	b. Mandola and Ma Ika of Tuntuli village
3. Narantake Hawa	3. Ma Mutu of Manatang village
Todaise Lelang	
1. Todaise Hawa	1. Kalambasi Ma of Warsalelang village
2. Mandawala Hawa	2. Sargang of Lelang Abang village

[1] Unlike all the clans in inland villages, which have only one adat house each, some clans in Kolijahi have more than one.

The 'eldest son's room' members are the descendants of the eldest son of the person who built the house when the village was established, while the 'youngest son's room' members are the descendants of the last son. In regard to intermediate sons, they all build their own houses after marrying, but these houses are not *adat* houses. Their *adat* house is that built by their father. Collectively, these sons are called *hawa e 'dilli wala*, 'strong men of the house'. Their function is to guard the house when it is in difficulties, to protect the eldest son, who represents them, and to protect the weaker youngest son. These conceptions explain why *adat* houses have only two bedrooms.



Abang = village
Lelang = clan
Hawa/Ma = house
Lup = room

Hawa = house (coastal Belagar dialect)
Ma = house (inland Belagar dialect)
Ia = youngest son (coastal Belagar)
Ika = youngest son (inland Belagar)
Mutu = eldest son (all Belagar)

Figure 1 . The structure of a Belagarese village

Today all *adat* houses in both inland and coastal areas are built in the modern style and have more than two bedrooms, but two of them are still designated eldest son's and youngest son's rooms.

Relationship terminology

Belagar relationship terminology identifies the following relationships: *ia mutu* siblings, *tedi timang* sisters and brothers, *tibiang wal* affinity between cross-cousins, *timang wal* between fathers and male siblings and ego and his siblings, *tiwa wal* between mother, mother's sisters, etcetera and ego and

his siblings, and *tidat wal* between grandparents and grandchildren. Further relationships are expressed by the terms in Table 3, which presents the relationship terms of address used by inland and coastal Belagarese.

Table 3. Comparison of coastal and inland Belagarese relationships: terms of address

Coastal Belagarese	Inland Belagarese	Genealogical relationships
Nidat	*Nidat*	FF, FM, MF, MM, FFB, FFZ, MFB,MFZ, MMB, MMZ, SS, SD, DS, DD, FZSSS, FZSSD, FZSDS, FZSDD, FZSDSS, FZDSD.
Nimang	*Nimang*	F, FB, MZH
Niwa	*Niwa*	M, FBW, MZ
Nimangera	*Nimaera*	MB, FZH, BWF, ZHF
Niwa Era	*Niwara*	FZ, MBW, BWM,ZHM
Nidat Mehal	*Nidat Mesal*	WF, HF, DH, SW
Nidat Saung	*Nidat Sakung*	WM, HM, SW, DH
Netata	*Nekaku*	eB, eZ, FBSe, FBDe, MZSe, MZDe, MBSe (w.s.), MBDe, WZe (m.s.), FZSe (w.s), FZDe (m.s)
Nekau	*Nekau*	yB, yZ, FBSy, FBDy, MZSy, MZDy, MBSy (w.s.), MBDy, WZy (m.s.), FZSy (w.s), FZDy (m.s)
Nedi	*Nedik*	a Z (m.s.), FBD (m.s.), MZD (m.s.) b B (w.s.), FBS (w.s.), MZS (w.s.)
Nedi Nimang	*Nedik Nimang*	
Nibiang	*Nebiang*	a ZH (m.s.), ZHB (m.s.), FZS (m.s.), MBS (m.s.), WB,
Nibiang Jaung	*Nebiang Jakung*	b BW (w.s.), BWZ (w.s.), FZD (w.s.)
Nepra	*Neparas*	W
Nening	*Nening*	H
Noal	*Nokal*	S, D, BS, BD, WZS, WZD, HBS, HBD, FZDS (m.s.), FZSS (w.s.), MBSD (w.s), FZSD (w.s), FZDD (m.s)
Nebilang	*Newilang*	ZS (m.s.), ZD (m.s.), ZHBS (m.s.), ZHBD (m.s.), BS (w.s.), BD (w.s.), BWZS (w.s.), BWZD (w.s.), FZSS (m.s), FZSD (m.s), MBSS (m.s), MBSD (m.s), FZDS (w.s), FZDD (w.s)

In daily use, terms of address and terms of reference are not differentiated. For example, if we ask a young boy to describe his relationship with a certain man or woman, he will say, for example, *aingu nimang* (he is my father) or *aingu niwa* (she is my mother) or he will say *aingu nidat* (he/she is my grand-

father or grandmother), and he addresses these people by using the same terms, *nimang, niwa,* or *nidat*. With the exception of *ia mutu*, the terms listed at the beginning of this section are expressed in the first-person possessive singular or plural. The terms as presented in Table 3 are all first-person singular possessive. Thus *nidat* means my 'FF', and so on. Even an unrelated elderly man or woman may be addressed as *nidat*, implying 'my grandfather' or my 'grandmother'. The father, mother, and grandparents of a *serang* partner would be addressed *nimang, niwa* and *nidat*, respectively. The particles *ni*, *ne* and *no* mean 'my'. *Dat*, *mang*, *wa* and *al* have no independent significance or usage. These terms of address imply closeness, tenderness, respect, and protection. Possessive particles are obligatory in Belagarese and related languages, but do not occur in the Austronesian Alor language of Pandai and Barnusa on Pantar and Alor Besar, Alor Kecil and Dulolong on the island of Alor. A speaker of the Alor language will address a man as *amang* (father), but will express 'my father' as *go amang.*

Bela baja

Whereas *serang* implies a relationship initiated between individuals, *bela baja* indicates a relationship between villages or regions. *Bela (belang*) means 'big', while *baja* means 'to promise' or 'to swear an oath'. Thus *bela baja* means a 'big oath'. Such an oath establishes a bond of brotherhood through a ceremony in which the contracting parties each make a small cut in their finger and drop their blood into a bowl to be mixed with *arak* and drunk in turn while promising to help and protect each other. Should one of the parties break such an oath, it is said he will suffer a calamity such as sudden death. These ceremonies are conducted only by rulers or their representatives, but bind all members of the villages or regions involved.

In the Belagar community there are *bela baja* agreements between Kolijahi and Bari, among Kolijahi, Malagulelang and Berimau, and among Bakalang, Lamalata and Dekipira. The *bela baja* between Kolijahi and Bari was established to end a war between the two villages locally known as *kakatua mliwar* (war of the parrot). This war was triggered by a Kolijahi man who was guarding his maize field from parrots and was kidnapped by people from Bari. Kolijahi then attacked and defeated Bari, and the war concluded with a *bela baja* ceremony, for which they planted a stone marking this relationship. According to oral tradition, at the time the stone was planted it was only about 20 inches long, but now it has a length of more than one metre. People told me that in 1972 a Kolijahi man dug the land around the stone to look for antique ware. He dug more than one metre deep, but did not discover the lower edge of the stone. People saw him and became very angry, demanding that he refill the hole.

To avoid conflict among neighbours, the Kolijahi, Malagulelang and Berimau villages also established *bela baja* to strengthen their previous *serang* relationship. Their *bela baja* relationship is called Bamou, Lakmau, Berimau after the name of clans representing the three villages. In the region of Bakalang village and its neighbours, people of Lamalata and Dekipira are speakers of the Pandai language. Their connection with Bakalang is through the Galiyao Watang Lema alliance, within which Belagar and Pandai are parties to a *bela baja* agreement. Bakalang is the *kampung raja* (raja's village) of Belagar. Under the *bela baja* arrangement, Pandai allowed its two border villages, Lamalata and Dekipira, to be ruled by Belagar, related in *amang-anang* (father-son) and *kakang-aring* (eB-yB) relationships.

Belagar is also a member of the wider regional Galiyao Watang Lema (Five Coastal Domains of Galiyao) alliance, and as such participates in *bela baja* with the Solor Watang Lema (Five Coastal Domains of Solor). Belagar is also involved in a *bela baja* relationship with people of Atauru and Mota'ain in East Timor (Gomang 1993:93-5; Barnes 2001:277-9, 292). *Bela baja* relationships between villages or regions may be strengthened by subsequent *serang* ties between individuals. *Serang* partners then become members of each other's clans and thus become situated in *ia mutu* (brother) or *tibiang wal* (wife-giving/ wife-receiving) relationships with other clans in the relevant community.

Belagar established similar relationships with border communities of other ethnic groups. In Pandai to the north, Balagar has linked itself to Alor Barnusa and Kui, (Gomang 1993; Rodemeier 1995; Barnes 2001). Border villages of Belagar and Pandai, such as Bakalang and Tuabang of the Belagar group and Dekipira and Lamalata of Pandai-speaking groups, are recognized as *amang-anang* (father-son) or *kakang-aring* (eB-yB) to each other. To the west the border village Nuhawala of Belagar is tied in a *serang* relationship with Sargang and Lelangabang of Tewa. To the south the people of Lamma are commonly acknowledged to be descendants of the people of Puintaru, the ancient kingdom of Belagar, which was destroyed in an earthquake in about the eleventh century. Subsequent to this calamity, people of Puintaru fled to many places. Some settled in Tubal Lamma and others in Nuhawala, Kolijahi, Bakalang and Tuabang. These communities regard each other as *ia mutu* or *tibiang wal.* Such interlocking institutions inhibit conflict between nearby communities.

Case studies

That the Belagar institutions of *bela baja* and *serang* are still effective in preventing ethnic and religious conflict may be seen in three recent cases recorded in February 1999, just three months after the tragedy of Kupang on 30 November 1998 in which more than 20 mosques were burned or destroyed.

Case one

The first case is known in the Belagar community as the '5th of March affair' because it took place on that date in 1995. It happened one day after Idul Fitri (the celebration marking the end of fasting during Ramadan). Kolijahi, the largest village in the Belagar region, was almost attacked by the people of the inland villages of Bukalabang and Berimau. This affair was triggered by a conflict between people of Bakalang and Kolijahi, both Muslim villages. In several previous full-scale battles, Bakalang had always lost. Since they felt that they could not defeat Kolijahi, they requested assistance from *serang* partners in Bukalabang and Berimau. A meeting was held one night in Bukalabang to plan an attack on Kolijahi. Almost all *adat* leaders attended the meeting. Also in attendance was a man who had *serang* partners in Kolijahi. After learning the planned date of attack, he asked permission to leave early so that he could guard his field from wild pigs. At night he went down to Kolijahi, where he let his *serang* partners know about the planned attack. The *adat* leader of Kolijahi then sent their men to ask help from people in inland villages with whom they had *serang* and *bela baja* relationships, including Bari, Malagulelang, Tuntuli, Manatang, and Warsalelang. On the day of the planned attack the warriors from Bakalang, Bukalabang, and Berimau were very surprised to discover Kolijahi to be well guarded by men from inland villages. Through the mediation of a former official village head (*mantan kepala desa gaya baru*), Paulus Waang, bloodshed was prevented.

Case two

The second case is related to the Kupang incident of 30 November 1998. The Kupang incident was triggered by religious tensions which rapidly spread to most villages in East Nusa Tenggara Province, including Belagar. Muslim villages became afraid that they too would be attacked by Christians. Bakalang and Kolijahi shared this anxiety. The situation was exacerbated by a number of young men from inland villages who agitated to fight young men from Bakalang and Kolijahi. In these circumstances the head man of Lakmau clan of Malagulelang, Johan Waang, went to Kolijahi and told the leader of communal prayer (*imam*) not to worry. Since the *imam* of Kolijahi was the younger of the two, and belonged to the Bamou clan, Johan Waang told him: 'Nekau Imam ake adadi, kalo Kolijasi ga naiba se ningga ba gatasi. Tunang timang tidat tang mu gi ping ma tang weng ekas seng, Bamou, Lakmou, Berimou ga sa nuku' (My little brother *imam,* don't worry, if anything is done to Kolijahi, it is we [of Malagulelang] who will resist it. Since the time of our ancestors we have been bound together in what is called Bamou-Lakmou-Berimou, that we are one).

On the same day, Sem Utang, the head man of the Numulelang clan of Bari, also appeared in Kolijahi. Before the headmen of the Kolijahi clans, he said, 'Tunang timang tidat tang mu pingga tang weng bela. Bela war

po jedung po tasi. Ning Bari ge susa guse Kolijasi ge susa. Kolijasi ge susa guse ning Bari ge susa. Koljasi ga naiba se ning rama misi ninga' (Since the time of our ancestors we have been in a *bela* relationship and the *bela* stone is still standing. Kolijahi's problem is Bari's problem. If anything happens to Kolijahi, we will not remain calm). Similar statements were made by *adat* leaders of Manatang, Warsalelag, Tuntuli, Berimou and Bukalabang. Thus, through this sense of brotherhood, religious conflict in Belagar community was prevented.

Case three

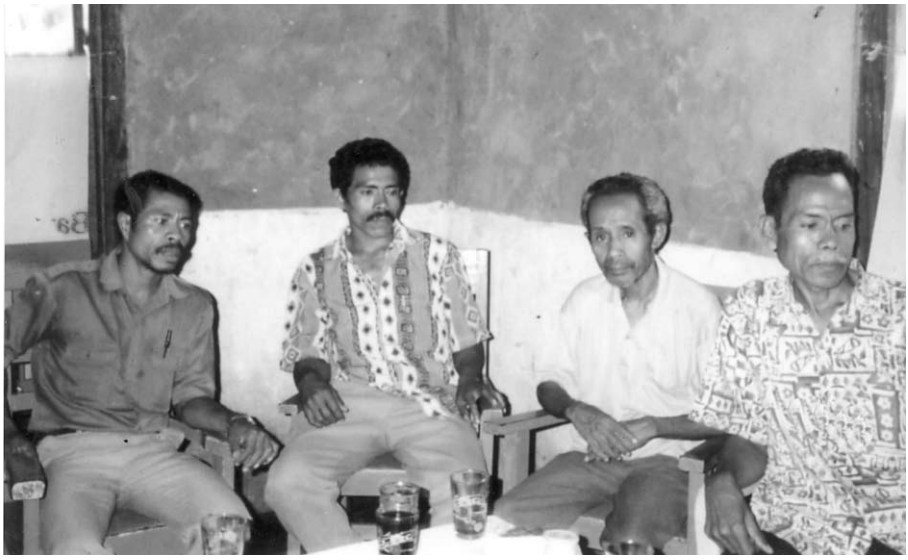
In the 1970s, fighting took place almost every Wednesday at the village market of Bakalang between young men from Warsalelang and Kolijahi. To stop this disruption, all the *adat* leaders of both villages agreed to seek a resolution by holding a *bela baja* ceremony. The ceremony was held in the dancing area of Olijahi clan of Kolijahi. Both parties swore an oath on the Bible and the Koran, promising to stop the fighting forever and promising to help and protect each other.

After this ceremony they made plans to build a church in Warsalelang together, which they finished in 1980. From that time, the relationship between the two villages has been harmonious. In 1994 the mosque of Kolijahi had become old and needed rebuilding. The initiative to rebuild it came from the people of Warsalelang. In a meeting to discuss the problem, an *adat* leader of Warsalelang announced, 'You, the Muslims of Kolijahi, have already built your church in Warsalelang for us. So it is our turn [the Christians of Warsalelang] to build our mosque in Kolijahi for you.' As of 2002, the mosque was in the process of being rebuilt through cooperation of the two villages. When rumours spread following the events in Kupang that the mosque in Kolijahi would be destroyed, the people of Warsalelang announced, 'It is we the Christians of Warsalelang who are building the mosque in Kolijahi, and we will defend it!'

Regional comparison

The Belagar institution known as *ia mutu lol 'tela wala* also occurs on Alor, where it is known as *kakari woto watang* (brotherhood between peoples of the interior and the shore), understood as an alliance between Christians and Muslims. *Woto* means 'inland' and *watang* 'coast'. *Kakari* indicates elder and young brothers. Examples of Christian and Muslim sibling villages are Alor Besar (Islam) and Adang (Christian), Dulolong (Islam) and Oa (Christian). The Alorese term *eneng* or *tniru* has the same significance as *serang* for Belagar (Gomang 1993), although there is no common house except the house of the Raja Alor in Alor Besar called *uma Pusurobong*. In *adat* phraseology this

Picture 1. *Bela* stone, the mark of *bela baja* relation between Kolijahi and Bari



Picture 2. Sem Utang the head man of Numulelang clan of Bari (first from right) and Johan Waang the head man of Lakmau clan of Malagulelang (second from right)

house is called *uma Alurung lewo tallo* (house of the Alorese in three villages; all Muslim), *uma ulu lewo karto* (house of inland people in ten villages; all Christian), *uma Pura lewo pito* (house of the people of Pura in seven villages; mixed Islam and Christian). Cohesion between *woto* (inland Christians) and *watang* (coastal Muslims) rests mostly on respect for the family of the Raja Alor of Alor Besar in the Toelimau family or the Raja of Dulolong in the Nampira family. Despite the similarity between the *eneng* relationship of Alor and the *serang* institution of Belagar, there is no shared *adat* house on Alor. When there are disturbances on Alor, *eneng* feel no urgent need to assist, unlike the custom on Belagar (see Case two).

The people of the Lamaholot-speaking group in East Flores, especially in the five Muslim domains, Lamahala and Terong (on Adonara), Lamakera and Lewohayong (on Solor), and Labala (on Lembata), perceive the word *watang* (coast) as meaning Islam. Locally they are called *Solor Watang Lema* (Five Coastal [Islamic] Kingdoms of Solor). However, the opposite word *kiwang* (inland) does not necessarily indicate Christians or Catholics (the religion of the majority of the people in the region). Historically the relationship between Muslims and Catholics in the region stems from conflict between Paji, 'Islam', and Demong, 'Christian/Catholic' (Barnes 1995:499). In the past, family ties between Muslim and Catholic villages existed, for example between Muslim Lamakera on Solor and Catholic Lamalera on Lembata, in which Lamakera was wife receiver and Lamalera was wife giver. Today, as Barnes (1996a:75) reports, 'friendships (*reu*) and trading ties exist between the two villages, but at times in the past their relationships were marked by bloody hostilities'. *Kakan-aring* ties were established between first arrivals in Lamakera and the local mountain people (Barnes 1995:507), but are no longer observed. A *bela baja* relationship was established with villages comprising the Islamic Galiyao Watang Lema of Pantar and Alor (Alor, Kui, Belagar, Pandai and Barnusa), but not with the nearby Catholic villages of Solor, Adonara, and Lembata. This situation is understandable because *bela baja* was established to ask help in waging war against the Demong (locals and Portuguese Catholics). The Lamaholot alliance remained vulnerable to local conflict, whereas the Belagarese supported each other both internally and externally.

Concepts such as 'village siblings', 'house siblings', and 'land siblings' also exist in many eastern Indonesian communities such as in Tanimbar, Southeast Maluku, and Keo of Flores (Forth 2001:100-1, 289-90, 305-6). On Yamdena, the largest island in the Tanimbar group, now known as the residency of West Southeast Maluku (Kabupaten Maluku Tengara Barat), as related by Petrus Melsasail (lecturer of sociology at Nusa Cendana University, who is from Yamdena), there exists the usage 'village siblings' (*bnu awa*). For example between Olilit Dol (East Olilit) and Olilit Da (West Olilit), between Meyanu Das (North Meyanu) and Meyanu Bob (South Meyanu), and between Alusi

Das (North Alusi) and Alusi Bob (South Alusi). However, people of these *bnu awa* are from the same ethnic group and share the same religion. People in North and South Meyanu are Protestant, while Olilit and Alusi are Catholic (compare Barraud 1979:89-90).

The same is true in Keo, Flores. The Keo also use the expression 'house siblings', but with an implication significantly different from Belagar usage (Tule 2004:133-8, 1998). In the Keo hamlet of Worowatu there are two 'big houses' (*sao mere*), which are sibling houses known as *sao mere waja ake* (big house of the elder brother) and *sao mere waja sebho* (big house of the younger brother). Both houses are located in Worowatu, although some members are resident elsewhere. In Belagar 'sibling houses' are located in different hamlets. For the Keo the sibling houses in the principal hamlet are central, while the residences of other members elsewhere are peripheral. The central houses are higher in status. Status differences in Keo are represented as 'big basket' (*mboda*), 'medium basket' (*gata*), and 'small basket' (*wati*), indicating upper, middle, and lower status (Tule 1998:78-9, 2004:135-8). In Belagar 'sibling houses' are located in different hamlets and have equal status. Neither is central or peripheral. Members of Keo 'sibling houses' claim origin from the same ancestor and membership is thus based on blood relationship. In Belagar, on the contrary, membership is based on friendship (*serang*) relationships. Finally, members of a Keo 'sibling house' may have a different religion, even though they claim descent from a common ancestor, whereas Belagar 'sibling houses' have both different religions and different ancestors, while treating and protecting each other as though they were members of the same family.

On the other hand, Tule's account of Catholic family members participating in his uncle's farewell party before his departure on the pilgrimage to Mecca, and his account of Muslims participating in family celebrations for the ordination of a Catholic priest, has many parallels in Belagar. When I went on the *haj* to Mecca in 1995, Christian members of my family took part in the festivities for my departure and return. An *adat* ceremony held for a Catholic priest in Kupang in 1992 was sponsored by Muslim Galiyao Watang Lema members (Gomang 1993:118). Such interfaith solidarity may be seen in politics as well. In Alor regency during the general elections of 1999 some Muslims voted for the Partai Krisna (a Christian party) and some Christians voted for Partai Persatuan Pembangun (a Muslim-based party) (Gomang 2001:151).

In central Maluku, the concept of 'village sibling', *pela gandong*, unites people from different villages and different religions. An example is the alliance between Sirisori Slang (Islam) and Sirisori Serani (Christian). In their *pela gandong* song, they assert *kitong basaudara* (we are brothers). Unfortunately, this conception exists only as a cultural ideal, and not as a sociological reality. When religious conflict occurred in Ambon in January 1999 and spread rapidly to the whole of Maluku Province, *pela gandong* was forgotten.

Conclusion

As chairman of the Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (Indonesian League of Muslim Intellectuals) in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur, I have access to information concerning religious conflicts in the province and elsewhere. Doubtless there are differences between individual cases. In eastern Indonesia generally, the conflicts which have received the greatest attention have not simply been a question of clashes between Muslim migrants and local Christians, as sometimes reported. The attacks by Christians on Muslims in Ambon on 19 January 1999 targeted local as well as migrant Muslims. As clearly shown by Bartels (2002), local community solidarity in Ambon and elsewhere was weakened by a variety of factors well before these events. Pantar has not had the same experience, despite economic changes which have worked against the economic interdependence between inland and coastal peoples. Relationships between Muslims and Christians on Pantar were not adversely affected because their sense of common kinship remains strong. Furthermore, in Belagar the relationship between different orientations of Islam, such as that between the more 'traditional' Nahdlatul Ulama and the more 'modern' Muhammadiyah or between Sunni and Wahabi Islam, is not relevant to existing ties between Christians and Muslims. In any case, although Muhammadiyah developed out of the Wahabi movement in Arabia, both Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama are Sunni. Of course not all conflict in Indonesia has a religious inflection, but the focus here has been on relations between religions in one local district.

Belagar 'family relationships' have commonalities with institutions elsewhere in eastern Indonesia, but also significant differences. The Belagar concepts of *bela baja*, *ia mutu lol 'tela wala,* and *serang* are similar to the Alor terms *kakari woto watang, eneng* and *tniru*. Alor and Belagar define *kakari woto watang* and *ia mutu lol teda wala* as brotherhood between Muslims and Christians. The Alorese have 'sibling villages', but not 'sibling houses', while the Belagarese have both, and their 'familial relationships' are better organized.

The Lamaholot-speaking groups to the west also have the ancient institution of *bela baja*. One such alliance linked the Galiyao Watang Lema and the Solor Watang Lema confederations. The people of Belagar strengthen these alliances by establishing sibling houses and sibling villages between their community and nearby groups, something not known in this form in the Lamaholot region. Whereas in the Moluccas the rather similar *pela* alliances have signally failed to suppress communal strife, on Pantar local institutions remain strong and provide a continuing basis for close cooperation between Christians and Muslims.

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