Chapter 2: Bajo Settlement History

Scattered throughout mainland and island Southeast Asia are three groups of people generally referred to in literature as ‘sea nomads’, ‘sea people’ or ‘sea gypsies’ (Sopher 1977). These three broad ethno-linguistic groups are the Moken, the Orang Laut and the Sama-Bajau. Each group is geographically, linguistically and culturally distinct and has adapted to the rich maritime environment and island ecosystems of Southeast Asia (Sather 1997: 320–8).

The Bajo of eastern Indonesia are a sub-group of the largest group, the Sama-Bajau. As well as being nomadic boat dwellers or former boat nomads, the Sama-Bajau are also inshore and land-based peoples:

Sama-Bajau speakers comprise what is arguably the most widely dispersed ethnolinguistic group indigenous to insular Southeast Asia. Sea-nomadic and much more numerous strand and settled Sama speakers live scattered, and in most areas interspersed with one another, over a vast maritime zone 3.25 million square kilometers in extent, stretching from eastern Palawan, Samar, and coastal Mindanao in the north, through the Sulu Archipelago of the Philippines, to the northern and eastern coasts of Borneo, southward through the Straits of Makassar to Sulawesi, and from there over widely dispersed areas of eastern Indonesia (Sather 1997: 2).

It is estimated that there are between 750 000 and 900 000 speakers of Sama-Bajau in Southeast Asia (ibid.) (see Map 2-1). Although a comprehensive survey has never been conducted in Indonesia it is estimated that Sama-Bajau speakers number between 150 000 and 230 000 (ibid.: 3).

The Sama-Bajau languages make up a discrete sub-group of Austronesian languages within the Western Malayo-Polynesian language family. There are ten Sama-Bajau languages and numerous dialects (Pallesen 1985). The Sama language spoken in Indonesia appears to be closely linked to the Southern Sama language spoken along the coast of Sabah, on its offshore islands, and in the Sulu Archipelago of the southern Philippines (Sather 1997: 9–10). In Indonesia, there is only ‘small divergence on a dialectal level’ (Verheijen 1986: 26–7) and Indonesian Sama ‘is only one language’ (Noorduyn 1991: 6).

The term Sama-Bajau, used as a composite label to cover all the languages spoken by members of this group, not only incorporates most exonyms commonly used by outsiders but also includes terms of self-designation used by Sama-Bajau speakers themselves (Pallesen 1985: 43). Most Sama-Bajau speakers refer to themselves as Sama or A’a Sama (Sama People) (Sather 1997: 5). In the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia, a host of names are used by outsiders, including Bajau (and its many cognates) and Bajau Laut (Sea Bajau). In addition to these, the
name Samal is used by Tagalog speakers in the Philippines to refer to land-based speakers of Sama-Bajau (ibid.).

Map 2-1: Area in which Sama-Bajau speakers are found in Southeast Asia.

In Indonesia, a number of terms have come into regular usage in the historical period. The Bugis name for these sea people was Bajo, and according to Velthoen (1997: 2), colonial Dutch observers tended to follow local usage. Thus the cognate terms Bajo and Bajau, and variations such as Bajos or Badjoos, appear in early Dutch and later English historical accounts from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (see Fox 1977a; Sopher 1977: 143–56; 158–61; 296–307; Reid 1983: 126). The name Bajau subsequently became established as a generic name for Sama-Bajau speakers among English observers (Sather 1997: 6–7).

In the Indonesian language, Bajau is the official designation as well as a general ethnic label for Sama-Bajau speakers (Acciaioli 1996: 25). As a result, this name is used by Sama-Bajau people in both Indonesia and Malaysia (Pallesen 1985: 43; Acciaioli 1996: 25; Sather 1997: 5).

In this study, the name Bajo is preferred to Bajau or Sama for a number of reasons: it is still the more commonly used exonym for Sama-speaking peoples in eastern Indonesia, and in particular in Sulawesi and East Nusa Tenggara; it is the name most commonly used by scholars writing about eastern Indonesia;
and it is familiar among Australian government officials and in literature regarding Indonesian fishing in the Australian Fishing Zone. The name Sama is used to refer to the language spoken by the Bajo peoples of eastern Indonesia.

**Origin and Dispersion of the Sama-Bajau**

The most comprehensive work regarding the origin and dispersion of Sama-Bajau language groups is *Culture Contact and Language Convergence* (Pallesen 1985). Based on linguistic evidence, Pallesen suggested a point of origin in what is now the southern Philippines. Around the beginning of the ninth century, speakers of Proto-Sama-Bajau dialects lived in the area of the Basilan Strait between the Zamboanga area of South Mindanao and Basilan Island in the southeastern part of the Sulu Sea (Pallesen 1985: 117). A number of groups split off during this early period. By the eleventh century further dispersion began with a major group moving southwest through the Sulu Archipelago and then along the northeastern coastal areas of Borneo (Kalimantan). Here communities again split into the North Borneo and Jama Mapun groups with the ‘forward wave’ of the Indonesian Bajau moving further down the eastern Borneo coastline via Tawau and Tarakan (ibid.: 121). The southward movement of Sama speakers into the southern Sulu and Borneo regions was ‘accelerated’ by the expansion of maritime trade after the founding of the Sulu Sultanate in the fifteenth century (Sather 1993a: 218). From the eastern coasts of Borneo, or perhaps directly from southern Sulu, Sama speakers spread southward into the Makassar Straits, arriving along the coasts of Sulawesi and spreading outward into other parts of eastern Indonesia some time before the beginning of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Pallesen 1985: 121; Sather 1997: 15).

Origin myths, stories and legends found among the Bajo in Sulawesi (and among other Sama-Bajau in Sabah and Sulu) cite Johore in Peninsula Malaysia as an original homeland from where the Bajo dispersed, bringing them to South Sulawesi and hence into relations with the kingdoms of Luwu, Gowa and Bone (Pelras 1972: 157; Sopher 1977: 141; Zacot 1978: 26; Reid 1983: 125; Pallesen 1985: 5; Sather 1993b: 31, 1997: 17). The Tukang Besi Bajo have versions of similar stories. One concerns a Bajo princess, or heavenly girl, from Johore, who, after being separated from her family, was washed up in South Sulawesi and later married the Prince of Makassar. She gave birth to four sons who ruled the regions of Gowa, Bone, Luwu and Soppeng. By linking their origins with a centre of power, Johore, ‘the most prestigious of all Malay kingdoms’, and one which preceded the powerful Sulu Sultanate, this gave legitimacy to the kingdoms of Luwu, Gowa and Bone. These myths, according to Sather, ‘have more to do with political ideologies and the subordination of maritime peoples in a succession of sea-orientated trading states than they do with actual migrations or literal origins’ (Sather 1997: 17–18).
The earliest evidence of the presence of Bajo in Sulawesi is the mention of a people called Bajo Sereng (Moluccan Bajo) in the major narrative epic from South Sulawesi — the La Galigo cycle (Pelras 1996: 74). This reference apparently relates to the role Bajo may have played in relations between the maritime powers of South Sulawesi and the Moluccas (ibid.: 74). According to Pelras (ibid.: 56), this text probably dates from the fourteenth century, at the time of the dominant kingdom of Luwu.

European historical records document the presence of Bajo in South Sulawesi from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In an early record from 1511, the Portuguese, Tomé Pires, documented the likely presence of Bajo in the kingdom of Gowa around the city of Makassar (Pires 1944 in Reid 1983: 127; Pelras 1996: 17). The Dutch Admiral Speelman, the ‘conqueror of Makassar’ (1666–67) remarked that the Bajo lived on small islands off the coast of Makassar and there they collected turtle shell which they paid as tribute to the King of Makassar and ‘must always be ready to go with their vessels in any direction they are sent’ (Speelman 1670, quoted in Reid 1983: 126). By the late 1670s, the Bajo were reported in northeastern Sulawesi in the Manado area (Valentijn 1724–26, cited in Sopher 1977: 300).

As skilled sailors and maritime specialists, the Bajo played an important role in the rise of the State of Gowa to a political and economic power in eastern Indonesia during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and later with the powerful Bugis kingdom of Bone to the east of Makassar. In these dominant maritime states, the Bajo were useful as explorers, messengers, sailors, and harvesters of sea products that were traded to other centres in East and Southeast Asia (Reid 1983: 124–9; Collins 1995: 14).

The eastward and southward dispersion of Sama-speaking boat nomads from the southern areas of Sulawesi over the last three centuries appears to have been closely linked to Bugis and Makassarese political and commercial expansion and migration in the region, and to the development of an archipelago-wide trading network in marine products — particularly trepang and turtle shell — which spread as far as the northern coasts of Australia (Fox 1977a; Sopher 1977: 144; Sather 1993a: 218; Velthoen and Acciaioli 1993). Although boat dwelling declined after the nineteenth century, having given way to a more shore-based existence, the trade in trepang and turtle shell in eastern Indonesia was an important factor in the distribution of Bajo through the region (Sopher 1977: 144).

Sama speakers are now distributed from eastern Kalimantan and Sulawesi across to Maluku and south along the Lesser Sunda Islands. The majority of Sama-speaking communities are found in scattered settlements along the coast of Sulawesi and on its offshore islands. In South Sulawesi, settlements are found around Ujung Pandang (Makassar) and on the Spermonde Islands, along the coast of the Gulf of Bone and offshore on the Sembilan Islands (Pelras 1972), as
well as on small islands in the Flores Sea such as Selayar, Tanah Jampea, Bonerate and Karompa. In Southeast Sulawesi, settlements exist on Kabaena, Muna, Buton and the Tukang Besi Islands, on islands in the Tiworo Straits, along the shores of Kendari Bay, on the island of Wowonii and to the north at La Solo. In Central Sulawesi, Bajo settlements exist along the east coast and on the Salabanka Islands (Tomascik et al. 1997: 1221), as well as on the islands of the Banggai and Togian archipelagoes. In North Sulawesi, scattered communities exist around the Gulf of Tomini and in the Gorontalo and Manado districts (Zacot 1978). It is also reported that there are communities of Sama speakers near Balikpapan in eastern Kalimantan and on islands off the east coast of Kalimantan (Sather 1997: 4; Tomascik et al. 1997: 1219). In North Maluku, Bajo communities exist on the Sula islands of Taliabo, Senana and Sular, on islands in southern Halmahera, at Gala and on Jo Rongga, Kubi, Katinawe and Dowora islands (Teljeur 1990: 204), as well as in the Bacam Archipelago, on Obit Island and the Kayoa Islands (Collins 1995: 16). In East and West Nusa Tenggara, communities can be found on the islands of Lombok, Sumbawa, Flores, Adonara, Lomblem, Pantar, Timor, and Roti, and on small offshore islands located near to these larger islands (Verheijen 1986). These communities are linked by strong bonds of kinship, marriage and language. Sama-Bajau-speaking communities are widely dispersed geographically but the Bajo people are a united ethnic minority in eastern Indonesia.

The majority of these Sama speakers in eastern Indonesia now live in pile house settlements built over the water in coastal areas, the littoral zone and on the land. Only small numbers of boat dwellers remain along the coast of eastern Sulawesi, most particularly to the north of Kendari at La Solo and around island groups in Central Sulawesi. The number of nomadic boat-dwelling people in Indonesia is unknown, but it is estimated that only a few hundred families remain (personal communication, Alimaturahim, 1994). Despite the abandonment of permanent boat dwelling and a more sedentary lifestyle, some Bajo still spend short or long periods of time at sea, living on boats while engaged in fishing activities. The degree of engagement in maritime lifestyles and pursuits varies between Bajo communities. As well as fishing and aquaculture, Bajo engage in boat building, trading, collection of forest products, and some land-based farming.

While the Sama language is the main language spoken by the Tukang Besi Island Bajo among themselves, many also speak Bahasa Indonesia with varying degrees of competency. Indonesian language reading and writing are important skills for a boat captain, who must be able to complete administrative papers such as surat jalan (travel passes) and other sailing papers for himself and his crew. Many Bajo speak the local Tukang Besi language (in which local market transactions are normally carried) and some speak other Muna-Buton languages, Bugis, Makassarese and trade-Malay languages. This multilingualism reflects
the wide variety of people with whom they come into contact through maritime and trading activities, and also the extent of their kinship ties.

**The Tukang Besi Islands**

The Tukang Besi Islands are located in the northeastern part of the Flores Sea, southeast of the island of Buton. There are five main inhabited islands — Wanci, Kambode, Kaledupa, Tomia and Binongko — and a number of smaller, mostly uninhabited, islands. The islands previously formed part of the realm of the Sultanate of Buton, but since 1964 they have been part of the province of Southeast Sulawesi (Sulawesi Tenggara). The capital of the province is the sprawling town of Kendari, located on the shores of Kendari Bay. Until recently, the Tukang Besi Islands were part of the Regency of Buton, with its administrative centre at Baubau, and the region was divided into four sub-districts (kecamatan): Wangi Wangi, Kaledupa, Tomia and Binongko (Map 2-2).

The chain of islands is adjacent to one of the largest and most biologically diverse coral reef systems in Indonesia (Tomascik et al. 1997: 754). In July 1996 the Tukang Besi Archipelago was declared a Marine National Park by the Directorate General of Forest Protection and Nature. The Wakatobi Marine National Park\(^1\) includes all the reefs and islands in the archipelago and covers 1.39 million hectares (13,900 km\(^2\)), which make it the second largest designated marine protected area in Indonesia (Stanzel and Newman 1997).

The Tukang Besi people are well known throughout Indonesia and beyond as ‘daring seafarers, shipbuilders and maritime traders’ (Evers 1991: 147). The maritime economy in the Tukang Besi Islands developed because these relatively infertile islands can only support a limited amount of small-scale agriculture, mainly during the period of the west monsoon. During the dry or east monsoon season the economy focuses on maritime activities, including collecting, fishing and trading. The trading routes can range as far as Singapore, Malaysia, Java and West Papua, and the trade involves a range of cargoes including timber, salt, tubers, second-hand clothes, copra and spices. These are mostly derived from other parts of Indonesia, particularly from Maluku and Java.

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\(^1\) In 2004, Wangi Wangi was split in two, and the five sub-districts were combined in a new regency or district called Wakatobi. Wakatobi is an acronym derived from the names of the four original kecamatan.
Map 2-2: Settlements in the Tukang Besi Islands, Southeast Sulawesi Province.
The major foods grown on the islands include cassava, sweet potato, corn, cocoa, cashews, peanuts, vegetables, coconuts and fruit. Rice and other seasonal foods are imported to the islands from other parts of Southeast Sulawesi. Fish is a staple part of the local diet and economy. The Tukang Besi Islanders engage in local fishing activities for both consumption and sale.

A 1994 government census counted a total population of 73,251 in the Tukang Besi Islands. The kecamatan of Wangi Wangi had the largest population with 34,081 inhabitants (see Table 2-1). It incorporates Wanci and Kambode islands (see Map 2-2), and smaller uninhabited islands on the east and south sides of Wanci Island. There are 16 villages (desa) within the kecamatan. Kambode Island has three communities: two desa, Kapota and Kabita, and the dusun (hamlet) of Kolo, with a total population of about 3000. The largest number of people is concentrated on the western and central part of Wanci Island.

Table 2.1: Population of the Tukang Besi Islands, 1994.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kecamatan</th>
<th>Wangi Wangi</th>
<th>Kaledupa</th>
<th>Tomia</th>
<th>Binongko</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>34,081</td>
<td>14,379</td>
<td>12,948</td>
<td>11,843</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The main town of Wanci is located in the metropolitan Wanse-Pongo area. Government departments and services, junior and senior high schools, and a losmen (guest house) are all located in Pongo. The main market was in Pongo, but a few years ago was shifted to the village of Mandati I, which is the closest land village to Mola Utara. Wanci can be reached by a number of routes, all involving long and arduous journeys. From Baubau, the capital of Buton, buses travel to the village of Lasalimu on the eastern coast of Buton, which is usually a three-hour trip. From here a Wanci-based ferry, and more recently a passenger speedboat, travel daily between the islands, which is usually a two- to three-hour trip. Ferries also make a 16-hour trip directly from Kendari to Wanci, usually once or twice a week.

The old capital of the vassal state of Kaledupa was Buranga, but now Ambeua is the official capital of the kecamatan which includes Kaledupa Island, the nearby island of Hoga, and the two uninhabited islands of Lintea and Tiwolu. There are ten desa on Kaledupa. Daily transport operates between Wanse and Ambeua in a small motor boat — a trip that takes 2–3 hours. The island of Hoga was formerly uninhabited because of the lack of fresh water supply, but in 1992 the local government constructed a traditional style Butonese house on the island to attract international tourists. This venture was unsuccessful, but in 1995 the

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2 The Bajo cemetery is located on the small rocky island of Otoue located to the south of Mola.
3 Bahasa Wanci, a local dialect of the Tukang Besi language, is the lingua franca used at the market by Wanci and Bajo people.
building was taken over by Operation Wallacea, a non-governmental organisation that invited fee-paying volunteers or students to join its two- to six-week coral reef survey expeditions (Stanzel and Newman 1997). This organisation has also been working with the Indonesian government to design and implement a management plan for the Marine Park using the data it has been collecting.  

The kecamatan of Tomia includes the islands of Tomia, Tolandono, Lintea and Sawah. The capital of Tomia is Waha and there are eight villages on the island as well as a small community on Tolandono. In 1996, the Wakatobi Dive Resort was established by foreigners on Tolandono Island (also called Onemobaa), which is located southwest of the main island of Tomia (Map 2-2). In early 2001, the resort opened a 1506m airstrip on Tomia to bring tourists by air direct from Bali.

The island (and kecamatan) of Binongko is much drier and more desolate than the other islands (Burningham 1996). Aside from maritime trade, the Binongko people engage in metalworking, particularly the manufacture of parang blades (similar to machetes) which are regarded as some of the finest in the Sulawesi region. ‘Tukang Besi’ is actually the Malay term for a metalworker or blacksmith.

**Bajo Settlements in the Tukang Besi Islands**

There are five Bajo communities in the Tukang Besi Islands. The largest is the settlement of Mola on the island of Wanci, which is divided between two villages called Mola Utara (North Mola) and Mola Selatan (South Mola). There are three villages on the island of Kaledupa — Mantigola, Sampela and La Hoa. The village of La Manggau is located on the island of Tolandono near Tomia. It is the Bajo fishermen from the villages of Mola Selatan, Mola Utara and Mantigola who undertake seasonal voyaging to the northern Australian region. This study is primarily concerned with these villagers, and in particular with men from Mola Utara and Mola Selatan, where most of the fieldwork was undertaken.

The Bajo are a minority group in the Tukang Besi Islands, comprising only about 10 per cent of the total population. The majority ethnic group are the Tukang Besi Islanders, sometimes called ‘Butonese’, who speak a distinctive local language.  

Like their land-based neighbours, the Bajo often identify themselves or are identified by others as Orang Buton or Butonese. This label can be somewhat misleading, giving an impression that the person or people in question actually come from the island of Buton rather than one of the islands in the Tukang Besi chain. This practice of identification by ‘historical allegiance

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4 Operation Wallacea now has a four year marine science program (2004–08) to guide social and biological research in Kaledupa, with two other research centres to support its activities in the sub-district. The impact of significant numbers of researchers on the local community is unknown but Operation Wallacea boasts that supporting the community through improved management of the marine environment has a direct benefit for the Bajo who depend so heavily on marine resources (www.opwall.com).

5 A detailed description of the Tukang Besi language can be found in Donohue (1999).
rather than ethnic identity’ dates from the time of the Buton Sultanate that once claimed the Tukang Besi Islands and its residents as part of its realm (Fox 1995b: 5). The generic term ‘Butonese’ can thus embrace a number of sub-ethnic groups from Buton and neighbouring islands in Southeast Sulawesi.

The Villages of Mola Utara and Mola Selatan

The settlement comprising the two adjoining villages of Mola Utara and Mola Selatan is located in the shallow inshore waters on the southwest coast of Wanci Island, approximately 2 km from Wanse (Plate 2-1). Running parallel to the coast, the Mola settlement extends approximately 800 m in length and up to 400 m from the shoreline. It is the largest Bajo settlement in the Tukang Besi Islands, and possibly one of the largest in Indonesia. It was originally one village, but was designated as two villages in 1981 because of its growing population. Each village is divided into two hamlets. In 1994 Mola Utara had a population of 1963 living in 338 houses, while Mola Selatan was slightly larger with a population of 2315 living in 388 houses (see Table 2-2). In some cases there was more than one family living in a house, so the number of houses did not reflect the number of families. Mola Utara is much smaller in area than Mola Selatan (2.3 km² as against 6 km²), so had a higher population density. High rates of seasonal migration mean that population numbers fluctuate over time, particularly during the east monsoon between the months of July and December, when males engage in voyaging and families and extended relatives resettle in Pepela for the duration of the fishing season. Moreover, since Bajo people often spend extended periods of time away from Mola engaged in other activities, it is difficult to obtain exact population numbers.

Table 2-2: Population and number of houses in Mola, 1994.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>No. of houses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mola Utara</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>982</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mola Selatan</td>
<td>1158</td>
<td>1157</td>
<td>2315</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Kapubaten Buton (1994a: 9) and 1994 field survey data.

The Mola population is predominantly Bajo, but some intermarriage has taken place with other Tukang Besi people and with other Butonese, Bugis, Makassarese and Moluccans, as well as with Bajo from other parts of Indonesia. Many Bajo living in Mola Utara originated directly from other communities or boat anchorages in Buton, whereas most of the middle-aged population of Mola Selatan were born in or originated from Mantigola in the late 1950s. Some elderly Bajo reported they were born at sea on small boats called soppe. This older generation had parents who were born in places like Kulingsusu, Pasar Wajo, La Goro, or Bisaya in Buton or on the island of Kabaena, west of Buton. Others have parents
who were born in Oenggai (on Roti Island) or in Kabir (on Pantar Island). Most Bajo of the younger generation were born in Mola.

The Mola settlement consists of rows of houses built either directly on coral rock foundations or on wooden piles over the water, with each row generally separated by waterways or canals of various widths. Individual houses and village sections are connected by tenuously placed wooden planks or lengths of bamboo above the water or raised bridges between coral foundations. Some of the older village sections have larger areas of coral rock foundation in front of the houses. The settlement is accessible from the land by two main arterial coral rock pathways, one near a village office (kantor desa) and one near the mosque. There are also arterial footpaths running parallel to the main waterways. Every house in the settlement has direct access to the sea. Older residents claim that Mola was originally built over the water and quite a distance from the land, before permanent walkways were built in the 1960s, so as children they had to swim or travel by dugout canoe to attend school. Nowadays, Bajo travel around the settlement by foot or canoe, but some of the more recently constructed houses to the north and south are accessible only by canoe. Travel by canoe is often the fastest and easiest method of moving around the settlement and is competently undertaken by skilled Bajo of all ages (Plates 2-2, 2-3 and 2-4).

Tidal movements range up to 2.5m, periodically flushing out household rubbish and personal waste, but during low tides, particularly neap tides, a profound stench permeates the settlement. At times of very high tides and stormy weather, the rock foundations may be submerged in some locations.
Plate 2-1: The villages of Mola Utara and Mola Selatan, Wanci Island.

Plate 2-2: The mosque and houses along the main canal in Mola Selatan.
Plate 2-3: Houses lining a narrow canal in central Mola Utara.

Plate 2-4: Recently built houses on the northern end of Mola Utara.
The Mola Bajo have no territorial right or claim to the body of water in which they build their houses. Only the coral rock foundations and the houses are privately titled. Houses are constructed from a variety of materials — wood, brick or thatched palm leaf panels, with roofs of asbestos, tin and thatched palm. Many of the wooden houses are actually built of materials purchased from Tukang Besi people, especially from Kaledupa. A thatched hut, with a wooden or bamboo slat floor, is normally built at the back of the house to serve as a cooking area. Since it is often the coolest part of the house it is used as a general-purpose living area, but in smaller houses the sleeping rooms and cooking area are contained in the one structure. Some houses have small toilet huts built on piles over the water, and one toilet is often used by a number of families. Bathing is most commonly conducted outside, using fresh water stored in ceramic jars or jerry cans. Some houses have a separate hut for use as a washing area, while the newer brick houses have a bathroom.

Since 1989 fresh water has been pumped from tanks on the mainland through pipes to a number of satellite holding tanks. Some houses in the central part of the settlement have water pumped directly to their houses. More commonly, women and children have to either collect water from a well located in Mandati I, or buy water from others, or travel by canoe to Kapota village on Kambode Island to collect good quality drinking water. Women spend long hours each day collecting water in plastic containers and then transporting it in canoes to their houses.

While many parts of the settlement have electricity, it is only available from late afternoon until around 6.00am and on Sunday afternoons. Not every household has its own television but communal TV viewing is a popular pastime, and about four houses, notably those belonging to Haji, had satellite by 1995 and were able to access international television channels.

There is a primary school (Sekolah Dasar Mola Utara) located on land in Mandati I. Bajo children’s attendance at school is irregular so there is a high level of illiteracy in the community. Few complete junior and senior high school, and even fewer go on to tertiary education. Parents who place a high value on education and have the necessary financial means or family contacts often send their children to school in Baubau or Kendari to receive a higher standard of education. 6 In 1995, around 20 young Mola Bajo adults had completed some form of tertiary education at universities in Baubau, Kendari and Ujung Pandang, but even these young people found it hard to secure formal employment.

6 Tukang Besi people from Kaledupa have had a tradition of sending children away for purposes of education to other parts of Indonesia for centuries (Donohue 1999).
Other Bajo Settlements

The *dusun* of Mantigola is built on sandbanks and reef flats in shallow waters on the western side of Kaledupa island, approximately 400–500 m from the mangrove-lined strand area of Desa Horuo and only accessible by boat. Desa Horuo is approximately 1 hour’s walk from Ambeua. Mantigola, with a population of around 600–700 people, is officially part of Desa Horuo, which had a total population of 1342 in 1994. Like Mola, the settlement experiences fluctuations in population with males sailing on seasonal trading and fishing voyages during the east monsoon.

Evidence of a larger population residing at Mantigola in the past can be inferred from a series of coral foundations further out to sea and from the fact that houses are now placed at some distance from each other. Mantigola is favoured by the Bajo because a large lagoon situated in the centre of the village serves as a deep-water anchorage. However, unlike Mola, there are only a few walkways around Mantigola and it is necessary to travel around the village by canoe at high tide. Houses are similar to those in Mola, constructed of a variety of materials such as bamboo, nipa palm, timber and roofing iron, and built either on wooden piles directly above the water or on coral rock foundations (see Plate 2-5). There is no electricity. Water must be collected from a well on the land at Horuo and transported in jerry cans by canoe. The isolation of Mantigola makes it difficult to obtain fresh food and household goods, and women usually buy food from Horuo or walk to the main market area in Ambeua. The Mantigola Bajo bury their dead on the land to the right of Horuo.

Dusun Sampela is located approximately 400 m from the mainland on the northeastern side of Kaledupa Island. Administratively it is part of Desa Lau Lua. The population of Sampela (around 1200 people) live in about 210 houses built of temporary material (personal communication, Chris Majors, 1998). Most of the village is accessible by foot over walkways and bridges. There is no electricity nor any local supply of fresh water, which therefore has to be collected from wells and transported by canoe from Kaledupa. Rates of immigration and emigration are lower for Sampela than for other Bajo villages. Sampela is reported to be very poor compared with Mola and Mantigola, but is one of the intended beneficiaries of community development projects funded by Operation Wallacea.
Plate 2-5: Low tide in Mantigola.

Dusun La Hoa is located on the eastern side of Kaledupa and is administratively part of Desa Langge, which had a total population of 1771 in 1994. La Hoa is the smallest of the Bajo communities on Kaledupa, comprising about 15 houses (personal communication, Chris Majors, 1996).

Dusun La Manggau is located on the northern tip of Tolandono Island, not far from Waha, the capital of Tomia Island, and has a population of 500–600 people. The settlement is administratively part of Desa Waiti. The hamlet comprises a small number of Bajo families as well as some Tomia people. There are 10–15 Bajo houses built above the water on the seaward side of the settlement. Their houses are accessible from the land on which the Tomia people live.

The History of Bajo Settlement in the Tukang Besi Islands

Village elders from the Bajo communities at Mantigola and Mola narrate stories of their ancestors’ arrival in the Tukang Besi Islands via the island of Buton during the nineteenth century. Two respected village elders, Si Bilaning and Si Mbaga, both reported that the first settlement or congregation area for boat-dwelling Bajo in the Tukang Besi Islands was on Kaledupa at Lembonga. Lembonga is located near to the present day settlement of La Hoa on the northern side of the island, not far from Buranga, the old capital of Kaledupa Island. Later, many Bajo moved to the other side of the island, to what is now Mantigola, to

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7 Si Bilaning, one of the oldest Bajo men in Mantigola, died in late 1994, and Si Mbaga, one of the oldest Bajo men in Mola Selatan (and a contemporary of Si Bilaning) died in May 1996.
fish during the east monsoon. They would then return to Lembonga at the onset of the west monsoon. The establishment of Mantigola came about when the Bajo asked the Sultan of Buton for a permit to build houses there because it was closer to the offshore reefs than Lembonga.

A Bajo man from Mantigola stated that the name ‘Mantigola’ comes from the phrase *menanti gula*, which means ‘to wait for sugar’ in Indonesian. The story behind its name is interesting in light of the Tukang Besi–Roti Island connections. Apparently, Binongko traders would sail to Roti to buy *gula air* (sugar from the *lontar* palm) which they then carried back to the Tukang Besi Islands and sold to Bajo and land-based people at the site of present day Mantigola. Binongko traders have a long established trading connection with Pepela and the local Rotinese population. Some of the first maritime settlers in Pepela were Binongko men.

The oral accounts provided by Si Bilaning and Si Mbaga concerning the Bajo arrival and settlement in Kaledupa may be compared with a record made by Pak Kasmin, a Bajo from Mola Utara, who graduated in 1993 from Haluoleo University with a teaching qualification. Pak Kasmin documented the story of the arrival of the Bajo in Kaledupa based on interviews with a number of elderly men in Mola and Mantigola, including Si Bilaning and Si Mbaga:

Before the Bajo came to the Tukang Besi Islands they lived in Pasar Wajo [south coast of Buton]. Sometime in the 1850s, several *perahu bidu* [large wooden boats] and *perahu soppe* [small wooden boats] left to survey the condition of the Tukang Besi Islands. They found the islands to be in a very strategic location and with rich seas possible for development. After that, they returned to Pasar Wajo to request a permit from the Sultan of Buton; they were given a permit to move to live in the Tukang Besi Islands. The Bajo people who moved to the Tukang Besi Islands were led by two *punggawa* [leaders], Puah Kandora and Puah Doba. They sailed in groups in several *perahu* [wooden boats] with several heads of family in each *perahu*. They first stopped at Lia on Wanci Island. Not long after they moved to Lembonga in the northeast part of Kaledupa, and there they lived on their *perahu bidu* or *soppe* and caught fish and gathered other kinds of sea products, and at that time they still lived moving from place to place. During the northeast season they moved to the southwest part of Kaledupa, known by the name Kampung Mantigola, and they returned to Lembonga during the west season. The arrival of the Bajo people in the Tukang Besi Islands was welcomed by the Government and the local society and they asked for a permit to build houses in Mantigola in the 1850s (Kasmin 1993: 32–3).

According to Sopher (1977: 151, 268), in the nineteenth century the headman of each Bajo group had the title of *punggawa* — the customary title of chiefs.
or leaders amongst the Bajo-Bugis, or Bajo owing allegiance to Bugis or Makassar princes. The Bugis used the term to mean a military chief or ship’s captain (Pelras 1996: 332). According to the Mola Bajo, Puah Doba, a Bugis leader mentioned in the above story, was also called Daeng Nyirrang. He married a Bajo woman and therefore there are close kinship links between the two groups. Bajo often say ‘orang Bugis saudara kita’ (‘Bugis are our brothers’).

During the nineteenth century the original capital of Wanci Island was at Lia Togo, situated atop a ridge with commanding views of the surrounding sea and islands, especially Kaledupa. The location was chosen for safety from Taosug slave raiders and pirates. Most of the Wanci population lived in the higher regions of the island, and settlement along the coast was relatively recent. The central market and commercial area previously operated from Lia Mawi on the coast. Following pacification of the area by Dutch colonial powers, a small Bajo community was established at Lia Mawi but the capital moved to the Wansee-Pongo area (Donohue 1994: 4). It is unclear whether the old Bajo settlement in present day Mola Utara was established at this time, but Si Juda from Mantigola stated that the original inhabitants of Mola came from the villages of Lagoro and Lasalimu on the eastern coast of Buton. Until the 1950s, Mantigola was the largest Bajo settlement in the Tukang Besi Islands. After this time, Bajo from Mantigola embarked on a major migration to Mola. Bajo were also driven out by rebellion and inter-community conflicts.

The Kahar Muzakkar Rebellion and Bajo Migration

Between 1950 and 1965, Kahar Muzakkar led a rebellion (gerombolan) against the national government which kept South and Southeast Sulawesi in a state of civil unrest. This was linked to the Darul Islam (Islamic State) political faction and associated with the Tentara Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Army) rebellion in West Java and Aceh. During this period, Sulawesi was divided between the followers of Kahar Muzakkar and the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (National Indonesian Army), and much of Southeast Sulawesi was under the control of the rebels (Harvey 1974: 1437). The Kahar Muzakkar rebellion, commonly referred to simply as the gerombolan by the Bajo, resulted in great upheaval for the Mantigola Bajo and was responsible for large numbers settling in Mola and other settlements in the Tukang Besi Islands. From there many dispersed around eastern Indonesia.

Older generation Mola and Mantigola Bajo recall the disorder in their lives, especially during the years 1956 and 1957. Some members of the Bajo community were active supporters of the gerombolan, but their actions were opposed by the Kaledupa people and their local government. Subsequent violent reprisals and attacks by the land people forced the Bajo Mantigola to move to Sampela. These attacks took place at the instigation of local units of the Tentara Nasional Indonesia based in Kaledupa who wished to have tighter control on the Bajo.
However, support for the rebellion continued, and about a year later, with further threats from the Kaledupa government, the Mantigola Bajo fled in their boats and canoes to Mola. This was done with the permission of the Wanci government which supported the rebellion (personal communication, Si Pallu, 1995). At that time, a small Bajo community of about 30 houses already existed in central Mola Utara.

During this period of unrest and upheaval, the majority of Mantigola Bajo moved to Sampela. A short while later some again fled from Mantigola and Sampela to other areas in eastern Sulawesi. Some Bajo moved to Langara village on Wowonii Island, close to Kendari. This community was later forced to flee to Kendari itself but eventually returned. Some people escaped to the villages of Matanga in the Banggai Islands and to Limbo on Kukkusang Island in Central Sulawesi. Others moved directly from Mantigola and Mola to Sulamu in Kupang Bay, and also to the Bajo village of Kabir on Pantar Island. The community of Wuring on the north coast of Flores near Maumere was also settled by Bajo from Mantigola during the rebellion (Burningham 1993: 209). However, Si Pallu and others from Mola claim the majority of Bajo who settled in Wuring were from the island of Kabaena, east of Buton, and from Pasar Wajo on the southern coast of Buton. Suffering from similar problems, they also fled to safer areas on the outer islands.

According to the Bajo, the kampung (village) of La Manggau on Tolandono Island was established after the end of the rebellion. At that point, most of the Bajo living in Mola remained there, although some returned to Sampela and others went back to Mantigola because of its proximity to offshore coral reefs. However, since the late 1980s, the most significant migration of Bajo from Mola and Mantigola — not just male members of the community but also women and children — has been to and from the village of Pepela on the island of Roti.

**The Village of Pepela, Roti Island**

The island of Roti is located in the Timor Sea, southwest of Kupang, the capital of West Timor. It is the southernmost inhabited island of Indonesia. Administratively it is part of the province of Nusa Tenggara Timor (East Nusa Tenggara). The capital of Roti is Ba'a, which is located on the western side of the island. The village of Pepela is located on the northeastern end of Roti and on the southern side of a large sheltered bay (see Map 2-3). The bay is fringed by sandy beaches and mangroves, while coral reefs are located in its centre. At the settlement of Pepela, the sandy beach drops away steeply providing a

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8 One of these people, Si Saddong, was the kepala kampung (village head) at the time; he was descended from Bajo nobility and was the keeper of a rare and valuable Lontar manuscript which documented Bajo history.
deep-water anchorage close inshore. The bay is very attractive and provides year round shelter from the strong easterly and westerly monsoonal winds.

Map 2-3: The island of Roti, East Nusa Tenggara Province.

Dusun Pepela is officially part of Desa Londalusi, within Kecamatan Rote Timur, whose capital is Eahun (about 9 km inland from Pepela). In 1994, the total population of Londalusi was 2765 and the population of Pepela was approximately 800. The ethnic composition of Pepela is mixed, comprising native Christian Rotinese, descendants of Muslim Butonese immigrants from other islands (Fox 1998: 127), Bugis from Southeast Sulawesi, and Bajo from the Tukang Besi Islands. The economy of the inhabitants of Pepela is based on fishing in the Timor Sea and associated trade in marine products. Most land is owned by the native Rotinese, so the Muslim inhabitants are dependent on the sea for their income.

The native Christian population engages in agricultural activity, local strand collecting, and inshore fishing in small boats. They are ‘not noted for their open sea sailing traditions’ (Fox 1998: 126). The history of the settlement of Muslim maritime people at Pepela has not been documented, but Pepela was traditionally a port for the eastern part of Roti (ibid.: 127). Roti was important in the maritime trading network in the nineteenth century because the Rotinese produced cloth sails made from the gewang fan leaf palm (Corypha elata) for their own small boats and for sale (ibid.: 126). A sketch of a Macassan perahu off Raffles Bay in
north Australia that was drawn by Le Breton in 1839 illustrates the traditional sails produced and traded by the Rotinese (see Macknight 1976, Plate 33). The Rotinese were also renowned for their cakes of crystallised sugar made from the juice of the lontar palm (*Borassus* sp.) (Fox 1977b). Bajo and Pepela residents state that, in the past, Binongko sailors from the Tukang Besi Islands regularly visited Pepela to purchase lontar palm sugar, which was then traded throughout the Indonesian archipelago. This trade continues to the present day, but vessels from Roti also sail to the Tukang Besi Islands to sell palm sugar directly to the Bajo.

This kind of maritime trading activity would account for some Muslim settlement in Pepela, possibly commencing in the early twentieth century but most probably after the 1920s. Subsequent settlement by other Muslim groups appears to be the result of fishing activity undertaken in the Timor Sea. Today the fishing population of Pepela is largely made up of migrants from other islands or their descendants, though many have intermarried with the local Rotinese population. The islands of origin most commonly mentioned by Pepela residents are Sulawesi, Buton, Binongko, Alor, Pantar, Flores and Java.

The settlement of Pepela stretches inland from the coast for approximately one kilometre. A pier dominates the harbour and from here a road leads through the centre of the village up the hill. Most of the settlement is on the western side, but to the east of the main residential area is an area called Kampung Baru (New Village), which is a cluster of Bajo houses. Further to the east, and situated at the base of a ridge, is a coconut plantation and cemetery. The main Bajo settlement is located away from the main part of the village on Tanjung Pasir (Sand Spit/Point), called Tanjung for short. There is a handful of small shops along the main road. There are one or two wells in the village, but most water is collected in jerry cans from a small lake and well to the west (about 1 km from the pier) and then transported in wooden carts. Houses are mainly of brick construction although a few are made from thatched palm leaf panels.

On the other side of the bay is the Christian settlement of Suoi (Dusun Suoi, Desa Dai Ama). In recent years some of the males from Suoi have joined Pepela perahu in fishing activities in the Timor Sea. To the east of Pepela is a small Rotinese settlement, Dusun Haroe (Desa Hundi Hopo), the last point that boats pass by before sailing into the Timor Sea.

A passenger ferry operates daily between Kupang and Pantai Baru, a small mangrove fringed bay on the northwestern side of Roti. A motor boat also travels

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9 For example, two residents, Hassan La Musa and Haji Saman La Duma, now both in their 60s, came from the village of Popalia on Binongko as young men when they were on trading voyages. They married local Rotinese women and settled in Pepela, bringing with them perahu technology. Both their fathers had previously sailed to Pepela and engaged in trade with the local population.
twice a week between Pepela and the village of Namosain in Kupang. The trip takes around six hours depending on the weather conditions.

**Bajo Settlement at Pepela**

In the past, Bajo from Mola and Mantigola sailed from their home villages to Pepela and used it as a base for fishing voyages into the Timor Sea. While in Pepela waiting for suitable weather conditions, the men lived on their *perahu* and re-provisioned with firewood and freshwater. A Mantigola villager, Si Suleyman, was the first Bajo to settle in Pepela, having married a local Pepela woman in the 1950s. The main period of Bajo settlement did not begin until the late 1980s, when a number of them moved permanently from Mola, Mantigola and La Manggau villages and built or rented houses at Pepela. This migration was the result of economic, political and cultural changes in the practice of shark fishing.

In late 1994 there were 42 houses in the Bajo community on the Tanjung. Of these, three were unoccupied and one was being used as a *warung* (small food stall). In addition, there were seven Bajo houses in Kampung Baru, and five in the main part of Pepela. In total, the Bajo occupied 50 homes in Pepela with a population of about 292 people (134 adults and 158 children). Of all the households surveyed, the majority of Bajo living in Pepela came from Mola Selatan (28 households), with lesser numbers originating from Mola Utara (8 households), Mantigola (10 households) and La Manggau (2 households). The village of origin for two houses was unknown. Most families in the survey said they had been living in Pepela for a period of 1–3 years, with a minority having lived there for 4–5 years.

The Bajo settlement on the Tanjung consists of two main rows of houses facing the sea (Plate 2-6). These homes are very basic in construction, most of them raised off the sand and made of panels of thatched palm. Some structures amount to little more than one room shacks. This reflects the temporary function they serve for the Bajo. Some houses in Kampung Baru are not raised off the ground and have dirt floors. The few Bajo houses in the main part of the village are generally better constructed and consist of larger wooden homes on stilts.

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10 These data should only be taken as an estimate because the number of people living in a house changed from day to day. The population was highly mobile, and in the week following the survey more men, women and children arrived from Mola and Mantigola. Some transient boat owners, captains and crew members sleep and eat in the homes of extended family members, while others may live on their *perahu* while in Pepela between fishing voyages.
At high tide, the Tanjung is partly separated from the main part of the village by a channel which cuts through the sandy beach and winds around in an arc behind the Bajo settlement. This channel allows small boats to enter behind the village and provides added protection from weather conditions during the west monsoon. A small walkway has been placed over this channel to allow pedestrian access to the Tanjung at high tide, but even this is under water when the tides are very high, and it is then necessary to travel a short distance by canoe to reach the main village.

There is no fresh water supply on the Tanjung, and this is a major problem for the Bajo. The office of the local camat (sub-district) is hesitant to provide any services because it has no assurance that the Bajo will stay permanently. The argument is that the Bajo could easily leave Pepela if the fishing situation changed. Consequently, those Bajo who report to the local desa office are only given visitor status, and only a few Bajo have decided to take up permanent residency.

The Bajo women and children have found it difficult living on the Tanjung, and although the conditions are similar to those in the Tukang Besi Islands, the general environment is poor. There are no toilets, fresh water must be purchased from local traders, and the women usually have to walk a kilometre or so even to wash their clothes. Only a few children attend the local primary school. The women reported that fish and marine products are scarcer around Pepela than in the Tukang Besi Islands, and there is a general shortage of food in Pepela in
contrast to Mola and Mantigola, particularly during the dry season, which is the main fishing season and hence the period when the population is at its highest. The nearest market is a 20-minute bus ride away. Vegetables are sold by local Rotinese from house to house and fish caught locally are sold directly on the beach. Often there is competition among women to purchase the catch. During the east monsoon, dried shark meat and dried reef fish brought back from fishing trips in the Timor Sea form a staple part of the Bajo (and local Pepelan) diet.