

Palu'e basketry: design, usage, culture and linkages

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Abstract

This article discusses the basket inventory of the Palu'e (Palu'e Island, eastern Indonesia) in the comparative framework of the Flores linguistic-cultural chain. Fibers, technique, and usage are identified, with notes on current distribution and skill transmission. The basketry is made of lontar leaves by women, who are also responsible for the agricultural products that the baskets are mainly used for. The most common function and shared denominator of smaller basket types in the Palu'e-Flores cultures, shown with the aid of museum collection items, is to keep betel for chewing, highlighting its tremendous cultural importance. Decoration is limited to triangular curls/twists on mad weave (dense triaxial) works, while smoking adds color and makes the basketry more durable. Only the ceremonial head-strapped betel basket, common also on Flores, is decorated with supplementary objects, such as beads. This basket only is made with one of the other two main techniques, oblique checker work and twill. All the basketry, with few exceptions, is still in wide use, but makers of more intricate works tend to be elderly. Comparison with baskets on the main island of Flores shows that Palu'e basketry is a close affine to this tradition but with locally distinctive features. Future comparative research could consider geographic and linguistic proximity in cultural contacts as a significant element in skill transmission, which is otherwise vertical (via closest kin), and relationships with migration patterns to and from Flores.

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Introduction

This article discusses the basketry of the Palu'e (Palu'e Island) with the aim to provide a comprehensive inventory and analysis, including: 1. identification of fibers and technique; 2. the primary use or function of each basket type; 3. an estimate of the current state of distribution and skill transmission. The languages of the Flores cultural-linguistic groups are linked in a 'dialect chain' (Fox 1998: 3-5) that extends throughout Flores and includes the small island of Palu'e, which lies off the north coast (Fig. 1). This fact forms a comparative framework for this discussion, revealing the kinship between the Palu'e and Flores basketry traditions.¹ The study begins with the basic questions: What baskets are there? Who are the makers? How and why are the baskets made and used?

The answers derive from fieldwork, study of technique and details, and scholarly texts. Palu'e and Flores items in the collection of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen en het Wereldmuseum (Netherlands, hereafter 'museum collection') are used for comparison.²

Insular Southeast Asia is home to countless basket producing cultures which together express an enormous variety in design. Ruth Barnes' (1993) overview of Southeast Asian basketry, with most examples from Indonesia, draws attention to the need for more detailed recognition of the craft, discussing technique, materials, distribution, as well as social aspects. Borneo is particularly renowned for its basketry and its indigenous

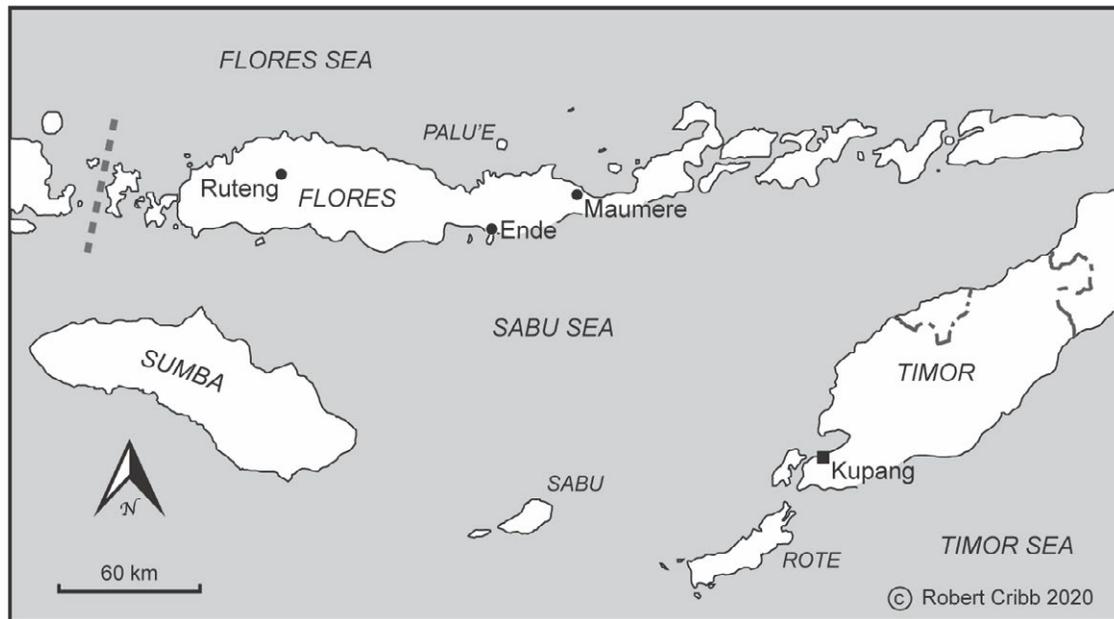


Fig. 1. Map of Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia,, with Palu'e to the north of Flores.

cultures produce some of the region's finest and most sophisticated basketry, as shown by the volume *Plaited arts of Borneo* (Sellato 2012), which gives the craft and its makers well-deserved recognition. J. E. Jasper and Mas Pirngadie's (1912) volume on Indonesian plaited crafts remains an important reference work, not least because it was published before the onset of more rapid social change and includes some ethnographic context, which is often lacking for items in museum collections. Relatively recent ethnographic studies of basketry, such as those by Dario Novelino (2009), Roy Ellen (2009) and Rajindra Puri (2013), are linked to ethnobotany and focus on skill transmission in the context of social change, highlighting the current potential of the craft. Producers of basketry and other woven crafts are often from financially poor agricultural communities, and are often women, who to different extents maintain indigenous-traditional ways of living and biocultural diversity. Today they are enveloped in various transformations (economic, socio-cultural, political, ecological), where their skills linked to the natural environment are too often neglected, when in fact they have potential uses for bio-culturally sustainable socio-economic development, given the right incentives.³

Neither Palu'e nor Flores basketry have to the author's knowledge been the main theme of any ethnological study, but ethnographers often record the use of basketry for the material culture inventory. Michael Vischer's (1992) ethnographic study of origin structures in a Palu'e ceremonial domain mentions basketry multiple times, noting names, sizes, general function, ceremonial usage, which is useful for comparison with more recent

observations. The present author has seen almost all the Palu'e basketry types on nearby Flores, but the distribution of basketmaking and types is far from homogeneous across the cultural groups, or the island. A few baskets from Flores are shown below together with Palu'e baskets of the same type, others are cited with permanent links to items in the museum collection. Similar basketry traditions exist in several other Nusa Tenggara Timur cultures too,⁴ and further to the west and north of the archipelago, such as Borneo, however the material tends to be different, pandanus or rattan instead of lontar. Hopefully this study will be useful for future cross-cultural comparisons of designs, usage, techniques, significance, and botanical knowledge.

Ellen (2009: 246) in her work about the transmission of Nuauulu basketry know-how explains that 'the concept of a "basket" is ambiguous in Nuauulu thought and practice, generating overlapping categories of material culture'. Puri (2013: 277) likewise states about the Penan, 'there is no name for the generic category of "basket" [...] people refer to particular baskets or other woven objects'. This seems to be the rule, for there is no proper generic word for basket in the Palu'e language either. *Pote* is a word that is used for some of the simpler square basket types, whereas all plaited objects can be referred to as *kena nanane* ('plaited thing'). The definition of basketry here is not the ethnologist's, which would be wider, including most of the plaited crafts or all plaited containers. What is meant by basket in this article corresponds to the English term and the Swedish (*korg*), and conforms to the common definition used in the (Western) crafts: a handmade container of interlaced

natural fibers for the holding or storage of things. A few objects with other names, such as wallets and pouches, are also included.

The range of other kinds of plaited objects that the Palu'e make, such as fish traps, walls, mats, hats, and the winnow, are not part of the main discussion, but it is noted that they, not least the fish traps and hats, require significant skills that overlap with basket making skills. The more coarse, large, or technically less complicated containers, made with wide, or even uncut, strands in checker work or open triaxial weave, and used to keep or transport fowl, fresh fish, rocks, weeds or trash, were typically not collected for practical reasons. Representative images of these are shown after the text together with ethnographic imagery of basketry, including the related plaited objects *wuwu* ('fishtrap') and *kamba manu*, a cage without bottom for fowl. They are all called *kota*: *kota manu*, a basket-container ingeniously simple in form, made from whole fresh coconut palm fronds, used to transport chicken or for brooding/hatching after the leaves have dried;⁵ *kota* ~, large baskets made from cracked bamboo or, secondarily, from the stem of lontar or coconut fronds, used for collecting rocks (~ *watu*), weeds/garbage (~ *héne*), or to keep fresh large fish (~ *hika*). The latter are the same as *kamba manu*, or can function as such, and are similar to large baskets used for trash or transporting fruits on Java and elsewhere.

The terminology used throughout the text is an amalgam of the referenced works, italics denote the local vernacular unless otherwise stated. Every basket type is represented with a picture or more in the main text. The samples are from the author's collection (with Magnus Danerek) or household, both used and unused at the time of acquisition.

Palu'e Island

Palu'e Island (Nua Lu'a) is a mountainous volcanic island with a diameter of about 7 km, located some 15 km off the north-central coast of Flores Island, as noted. It is inhabited by the Palu'e (ata Lu'a), a cultural-linguistic group with over ten thousand speakers of Sara Lu'a, an Austronesian language of the Central Flores subgroup (cf. Elias 2018, Eberhard et al 2021) of 'Flores languages' (Fernandez 1996). The population is traditionally divided among a dozen 'ceremonial domains' (*tana*, 'land with a ceremonial center and borders') and different clans or origin groups. Palu'e is an agricultural society, but in many domains and villages the men have a tradition of fishing and boat building,⁶ as well as laboring or trading-bartering for extended periods outside of the island, seasonally on Flores or, since the 1980s, for periods of a few years in Malaysia. The youth attend nine-years of schooling on the island. The majority continue to senior high school in Maumere,

Flores, and a considerable number continue to higher education, including on other islands, often supported by the parents farming activities. In the past women rarely left the island, but the men had good knowledge of Flores and established long-lasting links and exchanges with Flores communities (Vischer 1992), particularly the northern Lio, who have a traditional ban on weaving cloth, but make basketry like the Palu'e. Concerning material culture and the tradition of bartering; among other cherished goods, woven Sikka cloths, particularly black ones (*kasa mite*) were obtained from the vicinity of Maumere (Geliting, Hewokloang). One type, *dhama loka*, was originally obtained through trade, then, since the late 1800s, faithfully copied throughout the weaving domains, while it ceased to be made in its place of origin (Hewokloang).

In marriage, the tradition is to marry within one's own domain, but marriage alliances with Flores clans also take place. In the continuous circulating dowry system wife-takers bring the wife-givers 'masculine' goods like ivory or livestock (and money), and the wife-givers reciprocate with 'feminine' goods like woven cloths and harvested crops. Women continue to do most of the agricultural work, including planting, caring for, harvesting, and storing the crops, and the basketry they create is used throughout the whole process. It is in or by the kitchen, nowadays often a separate construction, that most baskets are found, sitting on, or hanging from, shelves of cracked bamboo (*ta*) or hanging from the ceiling. The men also make the tools they need for their work. They tend to work with harder materials, such as wood and bamboo, from which they make the tools the women use for weaving, or coarse fibers for works as the mentioned *kota*. Another tool the men make for the women, although more often purchased and brought from Lio, is the winnow (*lita*), a household item of bamboo skin and cracked bamboo or rattan, made with a 3/3 twill technique. Men also plait lontar mats (*dhebe koli*) and there are those who can make neat lontar hats (unnamed), and in the past sails (*laja koli*, like large mats) for their boats. The gender division in basketry is not as strict as in loom weaving because both sexes plait, but the rule is that women plait all the basketry except the *kota*. Overall, it reflects the asymmetric dualism and complementarity of the indigenous worldview, or *adha* (Ind. *adat* 'custom'), basically 'everything that the ancestors did'. All traditionally produced objects have specific names and are part of *adha*.

Palu'e used to be lush with pockets of forest, and it is still quite green and fertile except for the final months of the dry season. With an almost complete lack of fresh water during the long dry season (March-November), plants and trees were exploited for drinkable fluids before the introduction of water tanks. The lontar

palm (*koli/dhua: Borassus flabelliformis*), whose juice is tapped from the branches through an ingenious method, sustained the lives of several thousand people until the 1980s. *Néra* is a large mug made from folded, not plaited, lontar leaves to drink lontar juice at the place of tapping. Vischer (1992: 109) reports a fragment of a myth saying that the earth and the sun were once linked by a lontar tree, a recognition of the lontar palm as source of life. Today, although the number of tappers has decreased significantly, lontar trees are not planted and are rarely cleared from the agricultural fields. A ban, or ancestral prohibition (*bhije*), on cooking the juice remains, whether for distillation to arrack or make sugar. The planting of rice is likewise prohibited (though nowadays some rice is imported from the main island). Traditional crops are tubers, maize, different types of beans and peas, not least mung bean (green gram). Copra, cashew (non-endemic), and elephant foot yam (since 2020) are cash crops, which the men are involved with to a higher extent than traditional crops.

Basket making and culture

Basket making is a traditional knowledge type, transmitted by primarily practical demonstration from the older generation to the younger, similar to the more conservative loom weaving. Vertical transmission from mother to daughter is the norm, but skills are also often learned from aunts, or ‘little mothers’, and naturally and passively from the village environment, as Puri (2013) found among the Penan, except that the Palu’e rarely make basketry to sell,⁷ and thus lack the extra motivation provided by cash. Generally and traditionally, skill transmission of essential work begins from the age of five for both sexes, the boy following his father tapping lontar, the girl following her mother to the fields (Vischer 1992: 242). As a result of these processes, descent with modification (phylogenesis) within-group might be expected to be more significant for basketry than exchange between groups (ethnogenesis) (Tehrani and Collard 2009, Buckley 2012), though this supposition has not been tested. It would be interesting to discover whether Flores basketry reflects the ‘dialect chain’ pattern seen in the languages.

Almost all the major types of Palu’e baskets are still made and used in villages around the island. The people of the southeast of the island have a local reputation for being skilled at basket making. Only a few women in the Edo-Woto ‘domains of pig blood’ weave cloths, which is traditionally mandatory in the ‘domains of buffalo blood’ of the interior. Because the first are involved in alliances and exchange with people from the ikat-weaving domains there is some complementarity in function, as reported for the Lamaholot region (Barnes 1989: 105 in Barnes 1993: 85), but it is not very significant because most women know how to plait most

baskets themselves.⁸ The women of Woja, a coastal territory in the southeast with descendants from the weaving domains of Kéli and Ndéo, are skilled in both cloth weaving and basketry. To the author’s knowledge there are no special superstitions attached to basketry. Even cloth weaving, a culturally significant activity often associated with elements of competition and envy in East Nusa Tenggara, is subject to relatively few taboos.

Ecology matters but does not completely determine the choice of material. The Lio, like other Flores peoples, mostly use lontar leaves (Palu’e/Lio: *koli*) to plait baskets, but also use *Pandanus tectorius* (Susiarti et al 2013: 435) and *gebang* palm (*Corypha utan*. Palu’e/Lio: *poro/bhoro*),⁹ and rattan is also used to some extent. The latter three do not grow on Palu’e, but there are rattan-like species, and several plants provide bark for making strong strings or straps. The island is not biologically impoverished, the language documentation recorded some 250 plant species (see Danerek 2019a), half of them used in different treatments; a high number in comparison to reports from other areas in the Lesser Sundas (cf. Hidayat et al 2020: 3-6) or Central Flores (cf. Tima et al 2020). Palu’e weavers prefer the *gebang* leaves before coconut palm leaves for the tying of ikat motifs, and the thinly sliced leaves are brought from Lio, but like with pandanus, the whole leaves are never brought to make basketry. There are also potential options among the several bamboo species, but they are used for other purposes.

Lontar is versatile and its leaves are very suitable for basketry, probably the best of the endemic plant species. Palu’e baskets, with the few mentioned exceptions, are made from lontar leaf fibers, and every household use these baskets to different extents. Most of the basketry is rather rough, made to be strong for storage and transportation of agricultural goods, though with no limit on usage. Smaller items, up to a volume of a couple of liters, are used to keep personal belongings, such as betel (areca nut and betel fruit, not the leaf which is often used in other places/countries), are made with finer strands and are more pleasing to the eye. Betel chewing is essential in Flores culture for ceremony, social gatherings, transactions, social interaction generally, and betel is carried or served in different types of baskets. Tobacco, smoked buy men, is also kept under the lips by some betel chewers. In the poetic ritual speech tobacco invokes betel, and the reverse, and in sayings or proverbs, *sara mbako no’o wua mutu* (‘like tobacco and betel’) is a metaphor for unity and complementarity, likened to the relationship between two siblings (*ka’e ari*).

Usually, if someone needs a plaited work the person will make it by him or herself if they are capable. If not he/she will just ask somebody who has basketry skills

and give the person something in exchange. But even the few wallet-like baskets shown below that men use would normally be made by the wife, unless the man is a widower. Relevant for transmission are the ways men and women's basketry/plaiting skills overlap or not (Ellen 2009), for instance, men do not plait with 'the closed (or dense) three-way method' (Nl. *de dichte dri-erichtingsmethode*) that the women often use, but for the fish traps (*wuwu*), the *kota/kamba manu*, all made from cracked bamboo (*tane/hao kelane*) of the *hao* species, they use 'the open (or airy) three-way method' (Nl. *de ijle drierichtingsmethode*. Jasper and Pirngadie 1912: 50-54), also called this 'open triaxial weave'. The fish traps, which are illustrated in their text, are deserving of special attention. Technical skills also overlap with baskets made using checker work (two elements interlaced at right-angles).

Bamboo is widely used on Palu'e for construction, fish traps and many other things, but in basketry it (skin or cracked) is only used in a supplementary way as a stiffening material, for head strap fitting, or, next to coconut palm leaf stem, as a hidden support for a container's border (lip). The men are tasked with climbing the lontar palms and cutting off the long branches holding the leaves. It is the younger leaves, found on the branches higher up, that are chosen for plaiting because they are softer and bend more easily. After the branches have been cut off with a machete, they are left to dry in the sun for an hour or more, not too long, because then they become less flexible. The Palu'e do not boil the leaves, which occurs among the Sikka. Each individual leaf is carefully sliced with a fine knife or a *sepa* (Ind. *jangka* ≈ 'fiber slicer') to the desired width (cf. Bland 1906), which varies between the different baskets and sizes. The rest of the work is done only with the hands or with a thin wooden or metal plier, sometimes supported with a fine knife or blade. All basketry is double wrought, not only for strength, but so that the better-looking side of the leaf strands is visible both outside and inside.

The color of the dried lontar leaves is white-yellow. The ready plaited basketry is often smoked until yellow-brown, sometimes even until almost black, by hanging the object over the kitchen stove. The smoking makes it more durable and resistant to pests, and if done with care this finishing gives the basket an appealing color, often with a whiff of the salted pig fat (*wawi holo*), which is stored and smoked above the stove. Otherwise, decoration tends to be limited to patterning on the triaxial works, done by reverse-folding strands of fiber to make three-dimensional triangles called *wati* or *séra*, over the rhombus shapes of visible fiber elements (sets of strands). Sometimes three-dimensional 'horns', even towers or other hexagonal elaborations, are added

to the lids of the *dhudhu* (shown in the images below) and to the bottom as feet, which is common with this basket type and a well-known technique in eastern Indonesia (cf. Jasper and Pirngadie 1912 and museum collections). The baskets are not dyed but sometimes fiber strands are painted with ink before or after plaiting. The only truly ceremonial basket is the decorated *pote lo'o* ('little basket'), also called *pote lo'o nggorone* (see below) because it rattles from its contents of betel and other things when the wearer carries it from a head strap down the back, even more so when it is decorated and the wearer is dancing at the buffalo ceremonies (Figs. 2-3). Some of the basket types which are used for the storage of beans or maize are presented with that content in the traditional dowry counter-prestations from wife-givers to wife-takers, where they also function as approximate measure, which can vary a little between clans or domains.¹⁰ The larger of these baskets are today most often exchanged with 50 kg rice bags.

Two types, *pote lo'o* and *sapa*, are carried with a head strap. The strap is traditionally made from *Hibiscus tiliaceus*, plaited or unplaited, but other rattan-like material, bark, or commercial thin rope are also used. A head strap implies a woman's basket because only women carry baskets that way (*ére tengé*). Barnes (1993: 85, 90) found that, somewhat surprisingly, '[this] type of basket is absent from eastern Indonesia, where the field products are usually brought in by women carrying the goods on their heads'. The basket with a head strap is a common practical item, not least when carrying a burden in rugged terrain, and the strap can be hung over the shoulder too. More examples are shown below.

Three main techniques for interlacing fiber strands are used on Palu'e: checker work (straight and primarily oblique), twill, and the so-called 'mad weave' (from the Malay/Indonesian *anyam gila*). The techniques are well known and described elsewhere, only the mad weave less so, perhaps because this triaxial technique is indigenous to insular Southeast Asia and was not known anywhere else before the 1900s. Barnes (1993: 86-90) provides a summary of the main Southeast Asian plaiting techniques. Bland (1906) and Otis Mason (1909) provide good descriptions of the mad weave, and Sellato (2012) expounds the variety of Borneo plaiting techniques, including mad weave. More recently, Paul Gailiunas (2017) explores modern methods and the inherent possibilities of the technique, and Gerimis Journals (2021) in an illustrated zine (*Mad weave*) describes the life, works and methods of Yan Niuk, the only person in a small *orang asli* (Malay peninsula) pandanus weaver community who mastered this technique.

It is the 'closed' mad weave that is the more demanding and visually appealing of triaxial weaving styles. Jasper



Fig. 2 (above). Women from Cawalo wearing *pote lo'o* at the buffalo sacrifice ceremony (*pati karapau*). The nearest is made in oblique checker work, the second nearest in twill. Tomu, Palu'e. 2018.

Fig. 3 (below). Woman wearing a *pote lo'o* made in twill weave during the opening of the bringing of buffalo ceremony (*pua karapau*). The woman to the left in the background must be wearing a Dayak (Borneo) basket of the same type and size but dyed and of rattan. It has two extra baskets or layers inside, like the Palu'e-Flores type. Kéli, Palu'e. 2018.

and Pirngadie (1912: 52-54) report that this technique is used from Tapanuli (Batak), Sumatra, until West Guinea, but is absent from central Indonesia (south Sumatra until Lombok) where instead the simpler, open style of triaxial weaving, is used. They consider it the most prevalent technique in Sulawesi and mention that it is occasionally found on Borneo. Barnes (1993: 90) says of the triaxial technique, '[...] its highest development is in the southeastern islands, in Flores, Timor and the southern Moluccas', and that eastern Indonesia has 'an elaboration that is not usually found in western Indonesian examples of the type' (Barnes (1993: 85).

However, exquisite mad weave basketry is made by a Dayak community in the heart of Borneo (Kapuas hulu, West Kalimantan), whose works, *koban bronai*, are shown in Fig. 4.¹¹ The baskets and the intricate curled-leaf surface decoration with star-shaped flower patterns are curiously similar to the pandanus basketry from Malacca depicted by Bland (1906: 8, 12), which raises the question of the diffusion of this technique and craft. In the western part of the archipelago, with the Malay peninsula, it seems to be associated with coastal and Malay communities,¹² and the diffusion into Kapuas hulu may be the result of a river connection to Brunei (Bronai). The Batak of central Tapanuli, likewise, have coastal access on western Sumatra, whereas coastal eastern Sumatra (Riau) is part of the Malay cultural sphere. The more intricate curled-leaf surface decoration, similar to the just mentioned but made with lontar, exist in east Flores too, and it was successfully produced

by Palu'e basket makers in 2019 after they had been shown images of *koban bronai* betel boxes.¹³ Leaving aside the question of the wide gap over central Indonesia, the technique may as well have originated in eastern Indonesia, if not carried over from an earlier point in historical migration.

Palu'e basketry is made with a defined base, body, and rim, including the lids, which on most types are of the same shape as the covered part. Generally, each element of the weave consists of two strands (or fibers). The rim or the upper part of the container is marked by a line of folds or inserts, forming a simple pattern, and the lip can be supported by a concealed string of coconut leaf/leaf stem or bamboo fiber, which runs through it. Checker work is made in its basic form, plain or balanced weave of vertical-horizontal interlacing, with equally spaced warp and weft elements of the same width. Most often the checker work is oblique, with the warp and weft strands (or sets of strands) running diagonally to the body of the basket and crossing each other at 90°. With narrow strands this technique can create a tight, neat surface, as on the *pote lo'o*. The large baskets (*sapa, repi*) used to carry firewood or store over a dozen kilograms of crops are also made in oblique checker work, and so are nearly all the square baskets of different sizes.

When both the warp and weft strands go over-two under-two diagonally, a perceptual V-type pattern is created, a basic 2/2 twill. The twill technique is rarely



Fig. 4. *Koban bronai* (betel boxes) basketry from Kapuas hulu, West Kalimantan, made of *Lophopetalum* (Ind. *perupuk*) fibers, suited for detailed work. The average height is 7 cm.

used in basketry however, *pote lo'ó* being the exception. As mentioned, another common technique for interlacing is the tri-axial mad weave that uses three elements placed in three directions at 60°, which creates a surface of hexagonal units, appearing on the surface as three rhombuses, each representing an element passing over two others. Because of the basic symmetry of the weave, the resulting object naturally takes on a hexagonal shape, which can also be made to look round, unless more complicated folds are used, such as for the rectangular box *kenda* (see below). The Palu'e mad weave items do not use any supplementary technique other than twists and curls, as for instance reported for Belu, Timor (additional colored strands forming figures, Jasper and Pirngadie 1912: 202-203). Bland's (1906: 5) description of the mad weave technique and basketry shapes in Malacca could be applied to Palu'e, or anywhere else:

The baskets are made in various shapes and forms. All are built up in the same way, starting with a six-sided basket but with added strands to bring to any other required shapes. This is an art in itself and many who can make hexagonal baskets cannot make other shapes. The long and the square baskets are the most difficult.

Basketry types

Oblique checker work and twill

Hépu is a type of square-rectangular wallet, made with oblique checker and in various sizes but usually small (10 cm width), used to keep small personal items. The

lid, which slides over the container, is slightly shorter than the container but otherwise the same. The museum collection holds the same type of object (item RV-1710-30) with the name *rimbi laa laa* (not marking the glottal stops a'a,¹⁴ acquired from the Cawalo domain in 1909 or earlier), and described as a 'sirih bag' (betel bag, 9 x 6.5 cm). Basketry tends to be named the same throughout the island, with few exceptions, and people are often aware of the naming in neighboring domains.

Hépu can be made a bit longer to contain a handphone, such as seen by the author when the more regular *hépu* shown below was acquired. The museum collection holds several similar objects from Flores, some of them dyed.¹⁵

Luko, or luko siwe, is used to keep unhusked rice (brought from Lio), which, when kept together with ancestral beads (*dubhi*) and gold ear pendants (*koma*, from Lio), are transformed to the ceremonial rice grains (*siwe*) used to honor the deceased and communicate with the ancestors (cf. Vischer 1992: 223-224). Traditionally, containing *siwe*, beads, ear pendants, and tobacco, it is given as a mortuary gift to the dead. *Luko siwe* is like the *hépu* but lidless and more elongated, which allows the top part to be folded. *Hépu* are rarely made today, having been exchanged for modern wallets, but *luko siwe* are still prevalent.

Nggibe (Fig. 6) is a men's pouch or sling bag for personal accessories like betel and tobacco, of a type common on Flores. It is significantly smaller than the sling



Fig. 5. Right: *hépu* (14 x 12,5 cm [L x H]); left: *luko siwe* (13,5 x 17 cm).



Fig. 6. *Nggibe* (8 x 9 cm) with a bamboo *supa*, made before 1909. Photo: Museum collection (WM-1640). Image by the museum, used with permission.



Fig. 7. *Dhudhu pi'i*, unsmoked (13 x 13 x 8 cm [L x W x H] with lid).



Fig. 8. *Hi'i/Pote lapene*. The removable layers of *pote lo'o* minus one layer. The largest is almost the same size as the outer container (18 x 18 x 21 cm).



Fig. 9. *Supa* (4 x 4 x 7 cm).

bags used by the Lio (*rembi*) or the Nage-Keo (*bere*), supported by the only Palu'e men's *nggibe*, described as a betel bag (unnamed), in the museum collection.¹⁶ *Nggibe* is very similar to *hépu*, two-dimensional when empty, worked in oblique checker with a slidable lid/covering basket of the same type as the container. A shoulder strap is added, attached to the container and pulled through the two corners of the lid. *Nggibe* are rarely decorated. The lid on the museum collection item shown below is made with finer strands than the container, and the lip is sewn with green and red thread. It comes with a small bamboo container (*supa*) for the lime powder used to chew betel. Flores bags of the type tend to be considerably larger and decorated, often with colored strands forming patterns.¹⁷ There is also a women's *nggibe*; larger, three-dimensional, undecorated, and coarser, probably because *pote lo'o* is the women's main betel basket. The museum collection holds one item (RV-1710-28) of this type, listed as a betel bag (12 x 14 cm).¹⁸ Recently made ones are shown below in Fig. 29. The men's *nggibe* is rarely, if ever, seen these days, having been exchanged for modern shoulder bags or pouches, but it can be made. The Nage-Keo are currently renowned for large pouches of this type.

Dhudhu pi'i (Fig. 7) is a square-shaped lidded basket made with oblique checker work. The lid is the same as the container but slides over its walls. *Dhudhu* is the generic term for a different type made with the triaxial weave, and this type could fall under the generic term *pote*. The word *pi'i* ('completed, healthy') signals a state of purity and probably refers to its simple design. It is made in different sizes; the example shown holds over a liter, and is not truly 'pure' because it has a built-in unlidded *supa* (cf. Fig. 9) of 4.5 cm height to keep lime powder, which makes it a betel box. *Dhudhu pi'i* tends to be used to store small things such as betel or needle and thread, whereas larger ones with a container of two or more liters are used to keep beans. The museum collection includes a fine *dhudhu pi'i*, described as a betel box.¹⁹

Hi'i, or *pote lapene* 'the layers of the *pote*' (Fig. 8), is the name of a set of six to eight nested containers, stored inside the almost cuboid-shaped *pote lo'o*. Between the layers one can hide small or thin objects, like paper money. They can also be removed and used to store small things like betel or beans needed for the day.

Supa (Fig. 9), the smallest basket, cuboid-shaped, is used to store lime powder for the chewing of betel. The type is common on Flores and is often called by the same name (cf. Jasper and Pirngadie 1912), but purpose can vary.²⁰ A simpler, unplaited object of bamboo (cf. Fig. 6) for the same purpose also has the same name. It seems to be more common than the plaited *supa*. It is often built-in to the triaxially woven *hila* (see below).

Pote lo'o (Figs. 10-11) is a more refined type with a rounded cuboid shape. It is more laborious to make because of the fine strands used for the main container, done either in oblique checker, 2/2 twill (Fig. 12, Figs. 2-3) or both. *Pote lo'o* is the only basket which is made with two different techniques. The rim, just below the lips, has additional folds and twists of inserts that form a rugged line, which is both decorative and stabilizing. The lip lacks supplementary support and the last interlacing before the lip goes over two, clearly seen on the inside, but less so on the outside. At the base the elements flow naturally into the new direction, or angle, but the interlacing shifts to 2/2 twill, or the other way if the work was begun from the base. The inner layers (*lapene*, *hi'i*) are not as finely cut and made in oblique checker, and the first two are smoked. A head strap is tied to a holder of bamboo fiber, interlaced with the lontar on the two sides near the four corners so that it penetrates the two first layers.

Pote lo'o is a versatile carrying basket, often used in daily life to carry betel or smaller things, or even in the fields for sowing or picking, where it is more suitable for a young girl than the large *sapa*. Decorated with red cloth (symbolic value; blood, bravery), beads (which may include heirloom beads), seashells, goat hairs (the goat is a ceremonial animal), brass bells (the type worn around the ankles for ceremonial dancing), old coins and other things, it is a betel basket (*pote lo'o nggorone*) and part of the women's ceremonial dress. While every basket is individually decorated, the ceremonial style is the same throughout the domains. *Pote lo'o* has a volume of about 6 liters and like the *pote lapene* it has six or eight inner layers, totaling seven or nine with the main container (odd numbers), which makes the basket stable and sturdier. The maker/owner of the *pote lo'o* shown below insisted on keeping one of the finer inner layers before surrendering it to the author; apparently, she felt some attachment to it.

Pote lo'o are still common, not least in the Ko'a and Cawalo domains where *togo* ('chant-dancing') is still considered a necessary skill. Because it is more difficult to make than the previously mentioned baskets, the makers are fewer, but it is not endangered because the local schools have in latter years taught dancing and singing in complete ceremonial dress, thus encouraging its production. This type of (ceremonial) basket is widespread on Flores. Fig. 12 shows a sample from the Rongga minority group in southwest Flores, called *néo wati*. It is made of lontar leaves in oblique checker work, and has colored strands forming patterns, including horizontal and vertical lines of additional curled strands. It lacks lip support but is decorated with red cloth like *pote lo'o nggorone*, with modern knitting yarns around the rim, seemingly glued to the lontar, the head strap is also made of knitting yarns. The decoration marks the basket as ceremonial. This sample has one removable basket layer of wider checker work.

Sapa (Fig. 13) is a larger basket used to carry a wide range of things on the back, attached to a head strap, or to store food items in the kitchen or the next-door storage room, standing on a bamboo rack or shelf, or hanging from the strap on a beam. It is the most widely used basket on the island, used to collect firewood, which is mostly a women's task, or carry tubers, collect maize, beans, or leaves to feed goats. *Sapa* tend to become worn out because of the daily heavy loads, in which case they are repaired with new inserts (*cuki*, see the similarly repaired basket in Fig. 23 below). *Sapa* can also be used as a filter for the ash water used in ikat dyeing. It is sturdy, but also flexible, the sides of the lip can be squeezed to the opposing side. Sizes vary, but a volume of about 20 liters is common.

Like *pote lo'o* the work begins with a square bottom with visible corners, and the plaiting is made in such a way that the resulting object has a cuboid shape, becoming more rounded near the mouth. The *sapa* has no supplementary support at rim nor bottom, but the elements of the top five centimeters or so are composed of three strands, whereas the rest of the body is made of two-stranded elements. The rim, or the top part, is therefore thicker and stiffer and its boundary is marked with a triangular fold (half square), which can be felt and seen. The last interlacing before the lip goes over two. The image in Fig. 13 shows the *Palu'e sapa* without the head strap, and two Sikka (Dokar village) equivalents, called *lilin*, also of lontar. One has a plaited head strap of what appears to be *Hibiscus tiliaceus* fiber, and the other, larger, has only the head strap holder (another example in the author's collection uses non-plaited bark for the strap). The main difference between the *Palu'e sapa* and the Sikka (Dokar) *lilin*, although neither are really standardized, is that the *Palu'e sapa* has the strengthened top section, which is also a decorative feature.



Figs. 10 (above) and 11 (below). *Pote lo'o* (18 x 18 x 21 cm) made in oblique checker work. Note the change of direction and the line at the rim and the 2/2 twill weave at the bottom.



Fig. 12. Left: *Pote lo'o*, slightly smaller than the above and made in 2/2 twill. The main container is finished but still unsmoked, as is the single layer inside. Right: *Rongga néo wati*.

Repi (Fig. 14) is basically the same basket as *sapa* but with a square lid and without head strap. Sizes tend to be similar to the *sapa*. *Repi* is used to store various agricultural products. The top part of the container is made in the same way as the *sapa* above, but the elements consist of four strands, the rest of the sample is made with two-strand elements. Note that on this piece the left-to-right diagonal elements going over have a larger exposed surface than the right-to-left elements, but the interlacing still creates a dense surface because the element width is the same. Large baskets of this type are also called *sa'a*, often filled with tubers and stacked on bamboo racks in the kitchen.

Nggala, a large, coarse basket, was used until the 1990s to store large amounts of crops and foodstuffs. It was made of older, stiffer lontar leaves than those generally used for basketry. It was described to the author as not plaited, instead the lontar was tied to a round-rectangular shape with support from fibers or wood from lontar branches, and then closed with a rope at the top. *Nggala* had a height of up to 1.5 m and was used in the ceremonial dowry exchange (*Nawu wai/Nawu weta*), to present up to 150 kg of mung beans, a feat requiring several men, from the wife-givers to the wife-takers. Used together with *repi*, this conceptually female

counter-prestition is called *nggala repi* (Vischer 1992: 287). The old *nggala* was replaced by a more modern version, which has itself already become rare, having been replaced by 50 kg rice bags. It is plaited in oblique checker without the rim support of *sapa* and *repi* so that it can be folded, or it is given a lid like the *repi*, otherwise it is just the same type, only larger. *Nggala* is not represented with an image for this reason.

Pote (Fig. 16), the word for simple, small baskets of checker work and or a square/rectangular form, are used to store different kinds of small household items and people's private belongings. The rectangular box in the image (Fig. 15) has a support of cracked bamboo along the top edges of the lid, which with the straight checker work makes it unusual. It is included here with a few other boxes to show that basketry forms do not end with the more defined or standardized types.²²

Mad (dense triaxial) weave

Dhudhu (generic) means a box with a lid that has the same basic shape as the container, over which the lid slides. It is one of the most common types of basketry made with the mad weave technique, also found on Flores. The *dhudhu* in various forms (Fig. 17) is still made all around the island. It has a rounded hexagonal



Fig. 13 Palu'e *sapa* (at far right) (24 x 24 x 37 cm) perhaps a decade old, smoked dark brown, with two recently made, slightly wider, Sikka (Dokar) equivalents, one smoked and one unsmoked.



Fig. 14 *Repi* (26 x 26 x 35 cm).



Fig. 15. Rectangular checker work basket, about 20 cm long, with bamboo support. Nara village, Palu'e, 2014.



Fig. 16. Small unlined baskets of oblique checker work, used to keep betel or other small things. These *pote* are technically the same as *dhudhu pi'i*, but without the lid.

shape with six points at the base, as does the lid. As mentioned, the points are sometimes transformed with supplemental folds to small horns or even a kind of tower, so that the basket both stands on the points and is decorative. This type is called *dhudhu wati*.²³ *Dhudhu wati* and *dhudhu séra* have triangular folds on the sides of the lid, pointing up or down so that horizontal rhombuses, or 'eyes' called *watine*, *wua liru* or *séra*, are formed. The latter two words have spiritual connotations (*wua liru* 'heavenly areca nut').

A *dhudhu wati/séra*, or any *dhudhu* with finer strands or patterns, usually of smaller size, tend to not be used for

keeping beans in the kitchen, which is the main function of *dhudhu*, but rather for personal belongings like betel or weaving accessories. *Dhudhu lo'o* (lit. 'small *dhudhu*') is the same basket without the patterning. This type can also be made almost square, or seemingly octagonal. The museum collection holds a *dhudhu lo'o* with a volume of about 1.5 liters with the following contents: black, red, and gray yarns, and a piece of beeswax (used in weaving, see Fig. 27 below).²⁴

Dhudhu tend to contain less than 2 liters, but larger and smaller versions are found. All small and lidded baskets are used in everyday contexts, including as minor gifts



Fig. 17. Left: *dhudhu wati* (H (with tower): 21 cm, D: 18 cm). Center: large *dhudhu séra* (H: 16 cm, D: 36 cm) with a black *dhudhu lo'o* (H: 7 cm, D: 13 cm) on top. Right: *dhudhu séra* of average size (H: 10 cm, D: 23 cm). Front: Sikka (Dokar) *seneng* (H: 10 cm, D: 17 cm).

with agricultural produce for the wife-takers. The lid is often used as a temporary container. The rims of *dhudhu* are reinforced with a fine, thin piece of bamboo fiber, which is covered with rows of two vertical elements. The weave shifts at the rim, to continue in the same way again on the other side. Alternatively, as on the *dhudhu lo'o* below (see also *hila* and *kéka* below), which lacks the bamboo fiber support, the weave may not shift at the rim, but flows to the other side, with one of the three rhombuses of a hexagonal unit divided over the lip on each side as an upside-down triangle. The very large *dhudhu séra* in Fig. 17 was used by a weaver to keep her balls of yarn. It was made by her mother in Woja who was going to make her a new one. It can hold about 16 liters or 30 liters if the lid is used as an extra container. The sample from Sikka (Dokar), where *dhudhu* is called *seneng*, has only lontar strands as support for the lip. The lid is identical with the container; both are patterned.

Hila (Fig. 18), or *Hila hala* (*hala* 'place'), is a tray with a diameter of about 15-20cm used to serve betel. Therefore, it sometimes has a built-in lidless *supa* for the lime powder (cf. *dhudhu pi'i* above), placed closer to the walls than the center. It is made with the same triaxial weave as the tray, which allows for the triangular 'teeth' of the lip, with a rhombus of an element rising from the rim's hexagonal unit, like the *dhudhu lo'o* (also without support) but in the opposite direction. *Hila* can be used

to serve betel at any type of gathering. It is not very common, because betel is kept and served in so many basket types and so many ways. The museum collection holds a basket of this type (H: 4 cm, D: 15 cm) with the provenance given as Flores, named *kalerka lendol* and described as a plate for eating.²⁵

Kéka (Fig. 19) is a large, round, open basket used to temporarily keep foodstuffs or other things used in daily life, like balls of yarn. Technically, *kéka* is the same as the container *dhudhu*, the patterned lid being absent, but the six points at the edges of the rim below are allowed to protrude more to the sides than downward. *Kéka* is not as common as *dhudhu* but it is not rare. The museum collection holds a basket of this type with the provenance given as Flores, named *hora*, described as a betel basket with the size of a *hila hala* (H: 5 cm, D: 16 cm).²⁶ Fig. 20 shows the dense triaxial plaiting process used in making a *kéka*.

Codhu (Fig. 21) is a large cylindrical lidded basket, the lid being about half the depth of the main basket. It is used more inside the house than in the kitchen, for large household goods, such as cotton or cloth. The fibre strands are larger than for the previous types and it is minimally patterned (*watine*, *séra*). *Codhu* is more common in the coastal areas (Woja) and the makers are generally rather elderly. The maker of the example in Fig. 21 was a grandmother from the hillside domain



Fig. 18. *Hila/Hila hala*. Kéli, Palu'e. 2015.



Fig. 19. *Kéka*. H: 14 cm, D: 37 cm.



Fig. 20. An almost finished *Kéka*. Edo, Palu'e. 2019.

Kéli where it is rarely seen. The makers of the previously mentioned mad weave basketry items should be able to plait *codhu*, and vice versa, so its absence in some areas could just be a matter of it falling out of fashion.

Kenda (Fig. 22) is a large rectangular box which can be described as a coffer. It is used to store valuable household goods, particularly heirloom or especially valued cloths. Palu'e men have also said that *kenda* was also used to store personal goods on seasonal journeys by boat, like a trunk. *Kenda* have been made all around the island, but they are rarely made today. This type is one of the most difficult for the basket maker, partly because the rectangular shape is achieved with a technique that naturally results in hexagonal creations, but also because of the size, which varies but is typically large. *Kenda* are decorated with the same type of folded patterning as the previously mentioned mad weave items, and every side that faces the outside of both container and lid is supported with four or five pieces of thin cracked bamboo, or depending on height and overall size. The lid, which slides near to the bottom of the container, allows the inside to be filled with cloth way over the rim. The *kenda* shown below can hold about 45 liters of cloth when making full use of the slidable lid.

Two of the interior domains, Ndéo and Kéli, were searched for makers and only one maker, in her sixties, was found, another, older woman, said to be able to make small *kenda* could not be bothered anymore. The first made a couple of large *kenda* after she was promised payment. Although the technique and form is the same, it is not certain that the maker of large *kenda* can make small ones and vice versa. *Kenda* is known as *puku* in the domains of Ko'a and Cawalo whereas other basket types are named the same as in the other domains, with the possible exception of *hépu*. There are only a few makers in Ko'a and Cawalo. There are three skilled *kenda* makers in the Edo hamlet where the sample comes from, and a few young women are learning from them. The seniors can make both small and large *kenda*, and even a triangular box (unnamed) of the same style.²⁷ The museum collection does not hold any *kenda*, but has a similar rectangular object called *rinda* (RV-1710-31. Size 14 x 10 x 7 cm), also collected from Cawalo. It does not have bamboo supports, only the rim is supported by coconut leaf stem, and it lacks the triangular decorative folds.²⁸

The *kenda* type of basket is not only rare on Palu'e these days. Palu'e senior men who are familiar with Flores and the adjacent islands say that only the Palu'e make the *kenda*, and the museum collection has nothing similar from Flores. Bland reported that the type (shown in Bland 1906, plate 6) was rare in British Malaya already in the early 1900s. Other than *kenda*, the author has

only seen the rectangular *koban bronai* betel baskets (Fig. 4), which are different and small, and, in the Malaysian National Museum in Kuala Lumpur (visited 2015 prior to this research), a box of similar size and shape as *kenda*, probably made of pandanus, and with similar bamboo supports and decorative folds. Jasper and Pirngadie (1912: 173) mention a rectangular betel box called *kota woea* ([Lamaholot] *wua* 'areca nut') from Solor, made in both mad weave and checker work, and a large rectangular betel box of low height with the same name, made in both twill and mad weave, from Larantuka, east Flores. There are examples of these in the museum collection.²⁹

Another rectangular basket in the museum collection from the Lamaholot-speaking area is closer in appearance to *kenda*, the women's betel box *wadja* (*waja* 'crocodile').³⁰ *Waja* is also plaited with two methods, roof and bottom in checker work, walls in mad weave. Inside are four compartments and the walls are supported with cracked bamboo, like *kenda*. The Lamaholot baskets show that the skill required to make *kenda*, or large rectangular basketry in mad weave, existed in east Flores. The southern Lio (Lio-Ende) allegedly made a rectangular box of lontar with bamboo supports, used to store cloths or clothing, with the name *kopa*, or *kopa wuga*. The author is unaware of the technique and has never seen it, nor had the caretakers of the Museum Tenun Ikat in Ende. At least some of the Palu'e originate from the area of Ende-Roja (Danerek 2021): the skilled maker of the *kenda* shown below is named Roja.

Conclusions

This article has showcased the Palu'e basketry in the context of the different Flores cultural groups and shown how it is both distinct and localized, and part of the larger realm of Flores basketry, like the local language is part of a linked chain of Flores languages. The Flores cultures prefer to plait basketry with lontar, and the Palu'e, who have fewer endemic alternatives, do so exclusively with lontar, apart from bamboo *kota* as the occasional exception. The interlacing strands are always made of lontar leaves, whereas supports are made of thin cracked bamboo or coconut leaf/bamboo skin.

The lontar tree has for centuries provided the Palu'e people with fluid sustenance, cared for and harvested by men, as well as materials for basketry, made and used by women. Basketry is still a routine and indispensable part of daily life, as well as an integral part of Palu'e custom, maintained principally by women as well as by men (Vischer 1992). The cultures of Flores are influenced by geographic proximity, interaction, and frequent cultural exchange (horizontal transmission), so correlations in basketry assemblages do not necessarily follow linguistic-ethnic groupings. Research in basketry



Fig. 21. Codhu. H: 34 cm (with lid), D: 30 cm.



Fig. 22. Kenda (44 x 23 x 27 cm, with lid).



Fig. 23. An old *puku* (*kenda*) (36 x 22 x 17 cm) acquired by the author in Ko'a, 2016. Note the repairs consisting of inserted elements (*cuki*).

traditions among Californian Indian cultural-linguistic groups (Jordan and Shennan 2003) suggests significant ethnogenesis resulting from horizontal transmission across linguistic boundaries. Such transmission would cross less well-defined linguistic boundaries even more easily and this goes part of the way towards explaining the clear affinities of Palu'e and Flores basketry, alongside to the vertical branching of shared descent and language. Similarities can also to a certain degree be

explained by the use of the same main raw material and the similar challenges or needs to be met in daily life. To show which is the dominant effect is not part of this article's aims, and of course linguistic correlates can also derive from horizontal transmission. There is scope for further discussion and research, including the trial of phylogenetic methods, where appropriate.

If the dense triaxial 'mad weave' originates in coastal

Malay culture, spread through trade contact, abetted by the cosmopolitan ‘market Malay’ language used in the region for centuries (Collins 2005), then horizontal transmission via trade with subsequent localization may be its defining feature. However, the wide use of mad weave by eastern Indonesian (mostly) agricultural societies speaks against a Malay origin for this technique.

The local transmission of basketry skills is more vertical than horizontal since close relatives are the main vectors of transmission, but less so than with woven ikat, with which comparisons can be made. A Sikka cloth was appropriated (transmitted horizontally) by the Palu’e and then faithfully transmitted (vertically) for several generations until today. This is an outlier example however, and traditional textiles and their motifs can generally be used as ethnic markers, whereas the same cannot be said about Flores basketry. Further, Palu’e basketry, not even the ceremonial *pote lo’o*, does not signal intra-island domain-belonging either, which the ikat cloths to some extent do (Danerek and Danerek 2020). The relatively uniform style of Palu’e basketry between different domains, villages, and clans (who prefer endogamous marriage), suggest significant ethnogenesis in the distant past and a relatively slow rate of change, since pre-1909 made baskets in the museum collection are the same as those of today, except for a smaller, simpler variant of the *kenda*.

Concerning the nomenclature there is little uncertainty: it is mostly consistent throughout the island, but the everyday naming may be simplified or differ slightly between individuals, villages, and domains. Only *kenda* is named differently (*puku*) in the northern domains, from where the (technically similar) betel box *rinda*, merely smaller, with different function and without bamboo supports, was collected in 1909 together with the betel bag *rimbi la’a la’a*, which is similar to the out-of-fashion wallet known as *hépu* in the Ndéo and Kéli domains. The most common function of Palu’e and Flores basketry, except the largest-sized, is to keep betel and/or tobacco, which is confirmed by the short item descriptions in the museum collection. Flores culture is a betel chewing culture par excellence: betel is/was chewed ceremonially, as a pastime, and while working. The couplet *ngi’i ére mite, lima ére mite* (‘black teeth’ [from chewing], ‘black hands’ [from indigo dyeing]) implies valued attributes in a woman: diligence and hardwork.

The makers of basketry, especially the triaxial types, are often middle aged or grandmothers, which shows that the transmission of skills is not taking place as often as in former times, when there were few alternatives to lontar basketry and agricultural work. The children go to school and have little opportunity to pick up basketry skills, and many of the young want to earn their live-

lihoods in the city from a ‘modern’ profession. While the more technically demanding basketry is in decline, it would be an exaggeration to view Palu’e basketry as endangered, however. All the types discussed are still made, except the men’s *nggibe*, but the author was even able to order one of these during the final stages of writing this article.

The main techniques used for interlacing are biaxial oblique checker work and the dense triaxial mad weave. 2/2 twill is used only for *pote lo’o*, the only basket that is made in two different techniques. Patterning is limited to the triangular folds and curls, and horns/feet or towers, on the mad weave works. Other plaited objects tend to be made by men and mainly constructed from bamboo, a harder, more ‘masculine’, material.

The gender division is clear, most basketry is created by the women who are the caretakers of cultigens from seed to harvest, storage, and cooking, and the main function of the basketry is to store and transport those items, next to keeping betel for the daily chewing, and for storing other personal or practical accessories. The about 20 liters head-strapped *sapa*, used for both transport and storage, is the most widely used basket. The only baskets made by men are the coarsest (*kota*), made primarily from cracked bamboo using the open triaxial weave.

The mad weave technique is not endangered because the *dhudhu* are still popular. Several types, such as *hila*, *kéka*, *dhudhu lo’o*, all have the same base, which should help prevent a specific type from becoming extinct. But it was found that there can be significant differences in skill and familiarity, even in making the same general form of basket in different sizes.

Lontar basketry is still widely used, but certain types have few makers or have fallen out of fashion, exchanged for modern bags or boxes. *Kenda*, the preferred container for the storage of heirloom goods or cloth, lack skill transmission in most villages. This basket-coffer is perhaps only made on Palu’e today; not yet confirmed for Flores. The makers are few, perhaps a dozen, but there are at least a few young women who are learning how to make *kenda*, and the basket makers of their village have shown that they are able to make variants of the mad weave baskets with more intricate patterning (Fig. 29).

The betel basket *pote lo’o* (*nggorone*) is the only ceremonial and supplementarily decorated basket, of a type that is common on Flores and exists further away too (a Dayak version appears in Fig. 3 but the story behind it is unknown to the author). Finely worked *pote lo’o*, made in finely cut strands, are technically demanding and

time-consuming with the six or eight closely-fitting inner layers. It can be difficult to find makers in some of the domains/village, but its making is encouraged because it is part of the women's ceremonial dress, which shows how different parts of the cultural complex support each other. Because there is considerable overlap between basketry skills, ecology, and culture, Palu'e basketry is likely to persist for as long as the traditional crops are grown and the core of the *adat* culture (dowry exchange and buffalo ceremonies) is maintained.

There are not yet any social incentive schemes on Palu'e to learn traditional basketry, which can generate needed cash income and discourage migration or relocation to Flores, except for one or two small-scale attempts. One of the problems is the remoteness of the area, so that it until now it has been difficult to contact the makers, but electricity and telecom coverage are currently expanding. Basket makers can be visited directly on Palu'e, or by visiting one of the refugee/migrant communities along the north coast of Flores.³¹

Have all the Palu'e basket types been covered in this article? There is the possibility that some kinds of baskets have ceased to be made and became forgotten. During the final editing of this article the author managed to have a Palu'e elder on the phone over a poor connection, for some last inputs concerning the museum collection objects. To the author's chagrin, the man suddenly recalled a basket called *ko*, attested from his youth in Kéli. *Ko* was round, with holes 'like a *taekraw* ball', which suggests it was made with the open triaxial weave.

Photographs are by the author, unless otherwise stated.

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Baskets in Palu'e life (Figs 24-35)



Fig. 24. (Left). Planting of mung beans. The woman (from Kéli) is ceremonially dressed with a *pote lo'o* strapped to her head containing the seeds/beans from the previous harvest. Other women (not in frame) wear more ordinary clothing and use *sapa*. Palu'e. March 2014.

Fig. 25. (Below) Women from the Woto domain with *sapa* on way to pick mung beans. Palu'e, Mid-June 2019. With Mas Roso of WARLAMI.

Fig. 26. (Above) Mrs Meti plaiting a *sapa*. Mata mere village (Kéli). 2016. Photo: Magnus Danerek.





Fig. 27. Weaver waiting while her mother applies beeswax to the beater. Front-left, a *dhudhu séra* with a ball of black yarn in the lid, a yarn spinning bobbin resting on the edges. Nitung village (Nitu léa). 2016. Photo: Magnus Danerek.



Fig. 28. Freshly roasted coffee beans in the lid of a *dhudhu séra*. Mata mere village (Kéli). 2018.



Fig. 29. Assemblage of basketry by the makers of Edo mentioned in the text. *Kenda* in the background, several women's *nggibe* are not yet fitted with shoulder straps; on top of the pile of *dhudhu* is a variant that combines two or more plaiting techniques. Several baskets are still unsmoked. Palu'e. 2019.



Fig. 30. Mr Wongga making a *kota manu*. Nara village (Kéli). 2014.



Fig. 31. *Kota manu* with a chicken inside on the boat to Maumere. A rope is often attached to the edges of the frond's stem for easy carrying: if not, the stem functions as a handle. Flores Sea, 2018. Photo: Magnus Danerek.



Fig. 32. *Kamba manu*, cage of cracked bamboo for fowl, plaited with open triaxial weave. Turn it around and you have a *kota* (~ *watul*~ *héné*~ *hika*). Bako village (Téo). 2016. Photo: Stefan or Magnus Danerek.



Fig. 33. Palu'e men making fish traps, *wuwu*. Ndeo village (Ndéo). 2018.



Fig. 34. Plaiting fish trap with triaxial open weave. Ndeo village (Ndéo). 2018.



Fig. 35. Two *sapa*, seemingly stuffed with cultigens, hanging on the kitchen wall. A *dhudhu* without lid is sitting on the ground (far right). Edo, Palu'e 2019. Photo: Magnus Danerek

Notes

1. Documentation of language and oral traditions 2014-2016 (endangered language documentation, see Author 2019a) followed by several short field trips made mainly for weaving. See Author (2019b) concerning the vernacular orthography and pronunciation, here summarily described: c /tʃ/, é /e:/ bh /b/, dh /d/ (implosives), w /v/, ‘ /ʔ/ (glottal stop).
2. Permanent links to cited items are provided below. In searching, note that both Palu’e (Island) and Palu (Sulawesi) are spelled Paloe in the collection (oe = u in older spelling systems). Items from Palu’e can be searched with ‘Paloe (eiland)’. Because Palu’e is listed under Flores (culture, geography), try for instance ‘Flores lontar’ and the Palu’e basketry will appear together with Flores lontar basketry. The acquisition of the Palu’e items was made in 1909 by a ‘Schenking’, who also collected many of the items from Flores, before and after 1909. The more precise provenance is either the mountain domain/village Cawalo, written ‘Djavala’, or Mage, part of the coastal area/domain Maluriwu, likely the place where the transactions were made, rather than the specific provenance. Descriptions are not optimal, as of the last date of access (References/Archives).
3. May this documentation be the means not the end. While working on Palu’e basketry an inspiring project was begun in Sweden, called ‘The Basket is rising’ (*Korgen lyfter*), with exhibitions and plaiting courses based on the documented Swedish basketry heritage. By Sörmland Museum, Skåne’s Handicraft Association, and Östergötland County Handicraft Association. See <https://korgenlyfter.se> (accessed 20 Jan 2022). A rather new social enterprise, DuAnyam (<https://duanyam.com>, Accessed 20 Jan 2022), sells plaited works from rural communities in Indonesia. Samples of recently made Flores basketry are found under ‘Storage Baskets & Boxes’.
4. The Flores dialect chain extends to the nearby islands Solor and Adonara through the Lamaholot subgroup spoken also in east Flores, from where those islands can be seen.
5. The same basket is called *kata manu* among the Lio, where *kata*, like the Palu’e *kota*, also denotes the rough baskets of primarily cracked bamboo.
6. Men from the mountain villages of the Kéli and Ndéo domains are skilled makers of boats and fish traps. The boats used to be made in the village and dragged or carried to the shore through the steep, rugged terrain. Fish traps are still made there, and it happens that small or medium sized boats are made in the village. A concrete road can now be utilized to carry the boat to the beach.
7. Until some time ago Palu’e people sold basketry on the Palu’e market day at the Ropa market, Lio, straight south of Palu’e Island. Puri uses the term ‘oblique transmission’ for close relatives and ‘horizontal transmission’ for peers, whereas the first can also be called vertical, and the second oblique; reserving horizontal for persons of other villages or communities.
8. On a short field trip to Ende in April 2021, a weavers’ group of Wo Roja located in the mountain near the city Ende said that they bought their betel basketry from a Lio community. They had made basketry in the past, but currently there is almost no basket making in this community. The people from this village are aware of an Ende linkage to the Palu’e, in the far past, as are the Palu’e, (see Danerek 2021. Use the alternative link in the bibliography because the journal file is poorly copyedited.
9. Linkages: the author acquired a *kombu* basket from a Palu’e lady living in a Palu’e village on north Flores (Sikka), who had got it as a gift from her Lio in-law relatives. *Poro* is a coarser material than lontar and the rather large basket (H: 31 cm. D: 37 cm), which would be used for rubbish, is made with twilled wide fiber strands. The same basket, with the same name *kombu*, is also made in Ngadha, west of the Lio lands.
10. Vischer (1992: 286-288) lists several basket types and their use as approximate measures for the cultigens given as counter-prestations to the wife-takers gifts of ‘small and large goods’. There is some confusion with the naming, because of the mixed use of the generic forms (*pote* and *dhudhu*) and specific names. This can depend on the sources’ terminology or everyday jargon, from a specific domain (Ko’a) some 30 years ago. In addition, both the basketry and its cultural usage are subject to localizations, or intra-domain branching, although not to a significant degree. The *pote lo’o* (*‘pote’*) is said to contain up to ten kg of green gram (mung bean), equivalent to a tin with 15 kg, but they only hold about 7 liters. Perhaps what is meant is the square box *dhudhu pi’i*, which can be called *pote* (being square and in oblique checker work) and made large. *Repi*, likewise, ‘a square lidded basket’, is said to contain up to 3 kg of green grams but the present author knows it as a lidded *sapa*, which normally can contain at least 15 kg of the crop. The description again fits with *dhudhu pi’i*, which is also made large enough to hold 3 kg of green grams or more. The mix-up is understandable because both *repi* and *dhudhu pi’i* are lidded and made with the same technique, and the *repi* can be made shorter than normal and the *dhudhu pi’i* larger. *Dhudhu* is said to contain up to 1.5 kg green grams, but the word is generic, and *dhudhu* can be considerably larger.
11. The author learned about the *koban bronai* basketry from Ibu Myra Widiono, a social entrepreneur who runs Rumah Rakuji (Shelter for Culture and Arts).
12. The anonymous reviewer remarked that the technique is ‘coastal’ and ‘most likely Malay in origin’.
13. Cf. <https://duanyam.com>
14. *Rimbi* rings of the Lio *rembi* for a larger bag of the same type, but with shoulder strap. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/717035>

15. For instance: <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/744983>. Several of these bags only have the provenance Flores, but most of them look like the ones with Flores Lio provenance.
16. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1109377>
17. One of several Lio items, described as a cigar case (size 25 x 23 cm): <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/674071>
18. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/717033>. It is called *adje* (*ace*), the word used for another, older, unlidded, betel bag from Flores somewhere, which suggests it is incorrect for Palu'e: <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/585286>
19. Item WM-16378. The size is noted as 8 x 8 x 4 cm. This seems very small: the author has never seen such a small *dhudhu pi'i*. The collector did not note the name. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1108870>
20. The museum collection has one *boeloemata hora* of the size 9 x 5 x 5 cm, allegedly used to keep rice or maize, which seems unlikely, unless ceremonial grains is what is meant. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/774582>
21. The museum collection holds a similar box from Flores, but straight checker works are infrequent from Flores. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/672269>. It is unlikely that the Palu'e box was acquired from Flores.
22. The museum collection holds another rectangular box with the provenance Palu'e, collected the same year (before) as the other items. Unnamed and made in twill with both dyed and undyed fine bamboo fibers, forming patterns, it is an outlier, and could be of Flores origin. It is possible that the 'bamboo' actually is lontar. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/717043>
23. In Lio, the generic term for this basket type is *wati*. There are at least three Flores baskets named *wati* and equivalent to the *dhudhu* (*séra*, *lo'o*) in the museum collection, but they lack specific provenance. In Sikka (Dokar) this basket is called *seneng*. The Lio, Ende, Sikka, perhaps all the Flores groups, also have several named variants. The generic names might vary too because the cultures are not homogenous, they occupy much larger swathes of mountainous land than the Palu'e and there are many clans and dialects.
24. H: 10.5 cm, D: 23.5 cm. There is no name in the description, but the contents are proof that it was collected with ethnographic considerations. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/717038>
25. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/774580>
26. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/774570>. DuAnyam sells a basket of the same type from eastern Flores or Solor with the similar name *keleka* (Lamaholot) and described as a traditional plate like the above mentioned *kalerka lendol* (Palu'e: *hila hala*).
27. The museum collection holds several unnamed small triangular boxes with the provenance Flores, which includes Palu'e. The following are from before 1909 (from Palu'e), 1891 and 1865, the second is a tobacco box. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1109380>, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/674075>, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/594024>
28. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/717036>
29. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/715226>. Collected before 1908.
30. Two items, one sized 23 x 12 x 10 cm: URL: <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/596512>. Another sized 21 x 14 x 12,5 cm: <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/671966>. From before 1872 and 1890 respectively. The museum collection holds a similar basket to *waja* and *kota wua* from Savu, also made in two techniques, and described as a tobacco box (17 x 12 x 5 cm). <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/659149>.
31. The author co-wrote an article with Magnus Danerek for Garland Magazine (The Lontar basketry of Palu'e Island). It is a crafts travelogue and has some additional information, including an attempt to connect basket makers with a gallery. <https://garlandmag.com/article/lontar/> (Accessed 7 Jan 2022)

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