

Kite parts

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ABSTRACT

This guide names and describes the parts of a basic paper kite. Leaf kites are also mentioned.

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VERSION HISTORY

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Of course I used to fly kites in my childhood. But when it came time to name the parts of a kite, I knew I was in trouble. Here is a guide¹ which can help you too!

Paper kites

A basic kind of kite, as made throughout Indonesia, is illustrated in Figure 1. I use the term ‘paper kite’ to distinguish this kind of kite from the simpler ‘leaf kites’ described below, with the caveat that today the cover is more likely to be plastic (e.g. from a leftover plastic shopping bag) than paper.

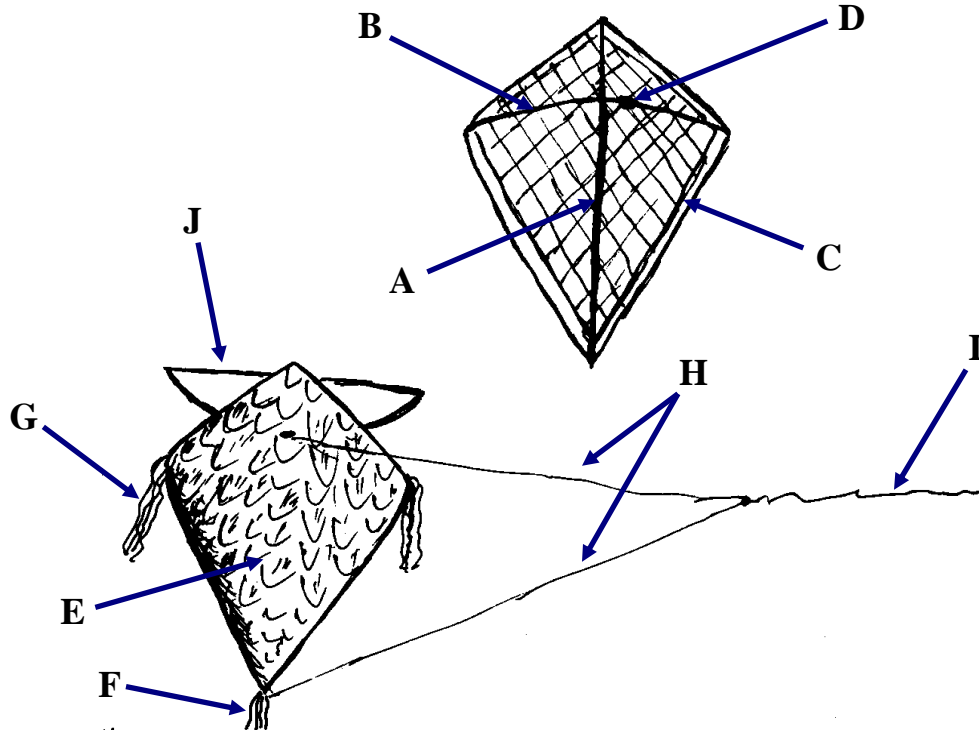


Figure 1. Kite front and back (slightly modified from Van den Berg 1996:637, used by permission)

¹ In putting this guide together, I am indebted to the work of René van den Berg, and I have drawn heavily on his definitions of Muna kite-part terms (Van den Berg 1996, Van den Berg and Sidu 2000). I would also like to thank Michael Martens and Veronica Coombs for their feedback on an earlier version of this paper. Beyond this simple guide, the serious lexicographer will also want to consult Von Dewall's (1908) thorough work on Indonesian kite terminology.

The parts of a basic paper kite (see labels in Figure 1) can be named and described as follows.

(A) SPINE, the up and down, vertical stick that a kite is built around = *peréce*, *tiang layang-layang*, *bilah bambu (kayu, dsb) layang-layang yg panjang/vértikal*.

(B) SPAR, a support stick (or sticks) placed crosswise or at a slant over the spine. For better aerodynamics, this piece is usually curved or bowed = *arku*, *kayu silang layang-layang*, *bilah bambu (kayu dsb) layang-layang yg lebar/horizontal*. If the spine and spar are not lexically differentiated, they can be referred to together simply as the *bilah bambu pd layang-layang*, also *tulang layang-layang*.²

(C) FRAME STRING, the string connecting the ends of the frame pieces of a kite and which makes a support for the cover = *tali atau benang yg direntangkan pd setiap sudut kerangka layang-layang*.

(A+B+C) KITE FRAME, the joined spine and spar(s) of a kite, usually also including the string connecting their ends = *rangka layang-layang*, *kerangka layang-layang*.

(D) Small WEIGHT, optionally attached to the spar. This weight can then be adjusted from side to side to balance the kite = *timbangan*, *penimbal miring untuk mempertimbangkan layang-layang*.

(E) COVER, the paper, plastic, or cloth that covers the frame to make a kite = *kertas (plastik, kain, dsb) layang-layang*.

(F) TAIL, a long strip of paper, plastic or ribbon that helps balance a kite in flight = *ekor layang-layang*.

(G) STREAMERS or FRINGES, optionally attached at the side-corners (that is, at the ends of the spar) = *jambu-jambu*, *unting-unting atau ular-ular layang-layang*.

(H) BRIDLE, two or more strings attached to the spine or spars, which help control the kite in the air = *teraju*, *tali pengendali layang-layang (diikatkan di sebelah atas dan bawahnya)*.

(I) FLYING LINE, the string running from the kite's bridle, which you hold to fly the kite = *tali layang-layang*. For fighting kites, the string is coated with a paste made from crushed glass (*bubuk gelas*),³ egg white and glue, in Indonesian called *gelasan* (string so coated is called *benang gelasan*). The objective in kite fighting (*aduan layang-layang*) is to cut through the string of one's opponent's kite.

² The terms *pěřecě* 'spine' and *arku* 'spar' are from Von Dewall (1908:417). However *Kamus Besar* omits *peréce*, and defines *arku* instead as *kerangka dr bambu untuk layang-layang*.

³ Or other material, such as crushed porcelain, emery, or metal filings (Von Dewall 1908:425).

(J) BOW-SHAPED NOISEMAKER = *sendarén*, alat berbunyi berbentuk busur yg dipasang pd layang-layang. The humming, buzzing sound produced by such a noisemaker can be called *dengung* in Indonesian.

REEL or SPOOL (not pictured), the object around which the flying line is wound, in order to keep the string from getting tangled or the kite from flying away = *geléndong*, alat penggulung tali layang-layang.

Fancy kites

The above are the parts of a simple kite, and practically the only kind of kite I have seen used in Sulawesi. These kites can be ‘dressed up’ with figures or shapes on the cover, such as points or half-circles (see e.g. Von Dewall 1908:422 ff.). You might investigate what designs are typical in the area where you work.

In some areas fancy kites with unique shapes may be constructed, with each kite shape having a particular name. See for example “Permainan Layang-layang Bengkalis” (Balai Kajian dan Pengembangan Budaya Melayu 2007) and the online gallery of the Museum Layang-layang (<http://www.museum-layang.com/index.html>) in South Jakarta.

Because designs for fancy kites can be so varied within a particular locale—not to mention from region to region—I do not pursue the topic further in this *general* guide, though you may wish to do so in your own lexicographical research.

Leaf kites

At the other end of the spectrum, in some locales of Indonesia a kind of simple or ersatz LEAF KITE is made from the dried-up frond of a basket fern. See Figure 2. In Kulisusu (southeastern Sulawesi), for example, leaf kites go by the name of *kamanu-manu*, while paper kites are called *patowala*.

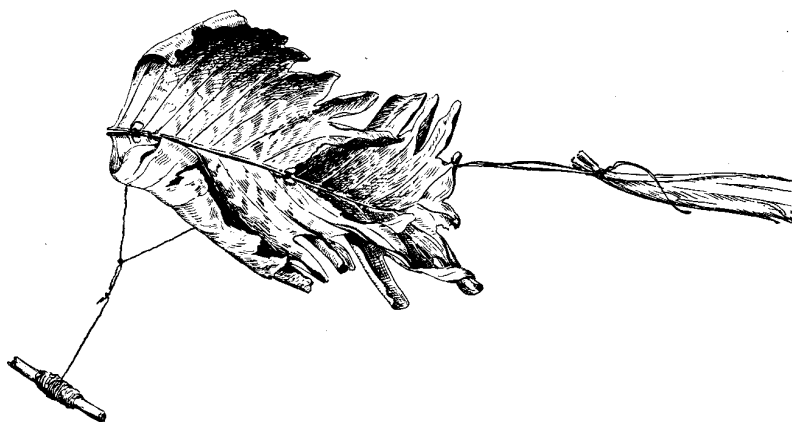


Figure 2. Leaf kite from dried fern frond (from Kaudern 1929:238)

Basket ferns (drynaroids) are characterized by having small, basal and sterile ‘nest leaves’ or nest fronds, and normal, fertile fronds (‘foliage leaves’) which are much larger. I have not yet identified the species from which Kulisusu leaf kites are made, but it is almost certainly one of the following three species (listed here in order of likelihood). All three of these ferns are widely distributed in Indonesia and can grow either as ground plants or in trees as epiphytes. Indonesian names are from Plantamor (2007); descriptions are from Cumming and Sked (2007).

Drynaria quercifolia (L.) J. Sm. = oak leaf basket fern = *paku daun kepala tupai*
Grows on trees and rocks, preferring sunny areas. Nest leaves up to 40 cm, broad, lobed, narrowed at the base like an oak leaf. Fertile leaves up to 100 cm and deeply lobed almost to the central vein; sori (spore-bearing spots on the undersides of the fronds) are arranged in regular rows on each side of the frond midrib. Leaves are shed during the dry season, with new fronds emerging during the wet season. An older synonym for this plant sometimes encountered in the Dutch literature is *Polypodium quercifolium* L.

Drynaria sparsisora (Desv.) T. Moore = basket fern = *paku simbar layangan*
Rocky slopes, occasionally in trees. Leaves up to 60 cm, sori small and scattered.

Drynaria rigidula (Sw.) Bedd. = *paku pasilan kelapa*
Grows on trees and rocks and in poor sandy soil, sometimes forming huge clumps. Fronds pinnate (simple leaflets arranged on both sides of a single stem) up to 1 m, or up to 2 m if ground-dwelling. As with *D. quercifolia*, sori are arranged in regular rows on each side of the frond midrib.

According to Kaudern (1929:238), leaf kites in both northern and southern Sulawesi were made from the sterile fronds of *D. quercifolia*. Slightly more exotic leaf kites may make use of a separate frame. The cover may be from dried banana leaf (*Musa* spp.), woven strips of bitter yam leaf (*Dioscorea hispida* Dennst.), or perhaps even some other plant.

To fly a kite (and other actions)

The following is a list of some actions associated with flying a kite. What others can you or your associates come up with in the language you are researching?

to fly kites = *bermain layang-layang*
to hover or float in the air = *melayang, melayang-layang*
to dangle, to hang and swing loosely (as a kite’s tail) = *berjantai terayun-ayun, bergantung meliuk-liuk (spt ekor layang-layang)*
to tilt, tilting = *miring, condong, séndéng, séngét, singit*
to nosedive = *menukik, terjun arah ke bawah dng kepala di bawah*
to flutter = *berjéla, berjéla-jéla*
to float or drift down = *meloyong, jatuh melayang-layang*
to get caught (in a tree) = *tersangkut, kesangsang, terserampang (di atas pohon)*
to hold a kite up high (in order to launch it) = *menganjung layang-layang*

to launch a kite, to get a kite up into the air = *menaikkan layang-layang*
 unable to get a kite in the air = *layang-layang tidak dapat naik*
 to play out line = *mengulur tali supaya layang-layang meninggi*
 to fly a kite high = *melambung, menaikkan tinggi-tinggi*
 to gaze upward = *menengadah, menéngok ke atas*
 to pull or tug the kite string = *menarik, menyentak, mengganjur tali layang-layang*
 to wind kite string on the spool = *menggulung tali layang-layang*
 to fight kites = *mengadu layang-layang*
 to coat a kite string with crushed glass or other abrasive material = *menggelas, melapis benang layang-layang dng gelasan*
 to chase a loose kite = *mengoyok, mengejar, berburu-buru layang-layang yg putus*

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