

KERIS
AND
OTHER
MALAY
WEAPONS

BY

G. B. GARDNER

Second Edition April, 1936

KERIS
AND
Other Malay Weapons
(with 91 illustrations)

BY

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EDITED BY

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1936

PROGRESSIVE PUBLISHING COMPAGNY.

156, KILLINEY ROAD.

SINGAPORE.

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD.

I venture to hope that this little book may be of interest and assistance to collectors of weapons. It is possible also that ethnologist may be interested in the customs and superstitions connected with these weapons and their origin.

The photographs are almost entirely of my own collection. I shall be very pleased to show this collection to anyone interested, who cares to write to me, care of my publishers or of The Crown Agent for the Colonies.

I should like to express my indebtedness to:--

The Hon. Y. M. Engku Abdul Majid, Hon. C.M.G., Dato Menteri Besar, Johore, and the Hon. Y.M. Engku Abdul Hamid b.Abdul Majid, for their kindness in showing me their valuable old weapons.

Pawang Salley for much helpful information on superstitions.

Dr.A.N.J.Th.a'Th.van der Hoop, Secretary of the Batavia Society and Dr. Poerbatjaraka for their assistance during my visits to the Batavia Museum,

The late Mr.Cyril Blair Cooper for presenting me with some of his MMS., Professor van Sein Calleniels for information as to age of *k. majapanit* and assistance with works of reference,

Mr. F.N. Chasen and Mr. H.D. Collings for placing the resources or Raffles Museum at my disposal,

and to

Sir Richard O. Winstedt, C.M.G., D.LITT., K.B.E. for his friendly interest, advice and help extending over many years.

G. B. GARDNER,

January 1936,

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PARTS OF A KERIS AND SHEATH.

(Nos. refer to the drawings on the opposite page).

1.

1. *Tangkai or paksi*: tang.

2. *Ganja*: guard.

3. *Gandik*.

4. *Lambai gajah*: elephant's tusk.

5. *Belalai gajah*: elephant's trunk.

but

6. *Kambing kachang*

7. *Janggut*.

8. *Tulang keris*: raised centre rib

(rare)

9. *Hujung keris*: the point (some-

times called *mata*, though this

properly refers to the whole

blade).

10. *Aring*: the pointed side of the

ganja.

11. *Dagu*: the blunt side of the

ganja.

2.

1. *Hulu keris* : the hilt.

2. *Pendongkok* : cup at base of hilt

3. *Sampir*: crosspiece of sheath.

4. *Sarong*: (the part covering the

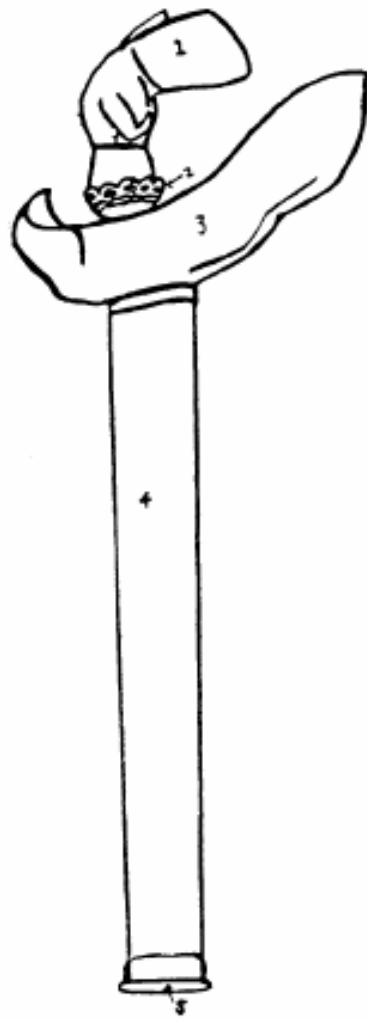
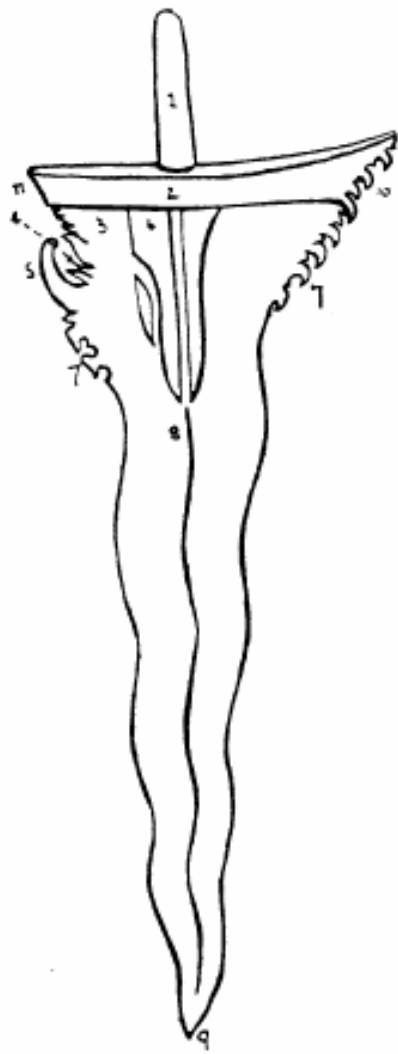
blade is strictly the *sarong*,

the term is applied to the

whole sheath).

5. *Buntut*: chap on tip of sheath

Note.—Nos. 4 & 5 are nearly always on the same side of the blade as No. 11.



THE KERIS

1. GENERAL.

The *keris* is undoubtedly the distinctive Malay weapon. It is necessary however, to define a *keris*. It is primarily a dagger with a handle set at an angle to the blade, a sort of pistol grip in fact, to enable the wielder to thrust.

The *keris* is I believe unique, in being the dagger with the greatest reach, compared with the total length of the weapon. All other daggers are held in one of two ways (see Plate 3 Nos. 1 & 2) but the *keris* is held as in Plate 3 No. 3 and with it there is a greater reach, although the thrust lacks some of the force derived from the swing of the weapon held as in (1) or (2).

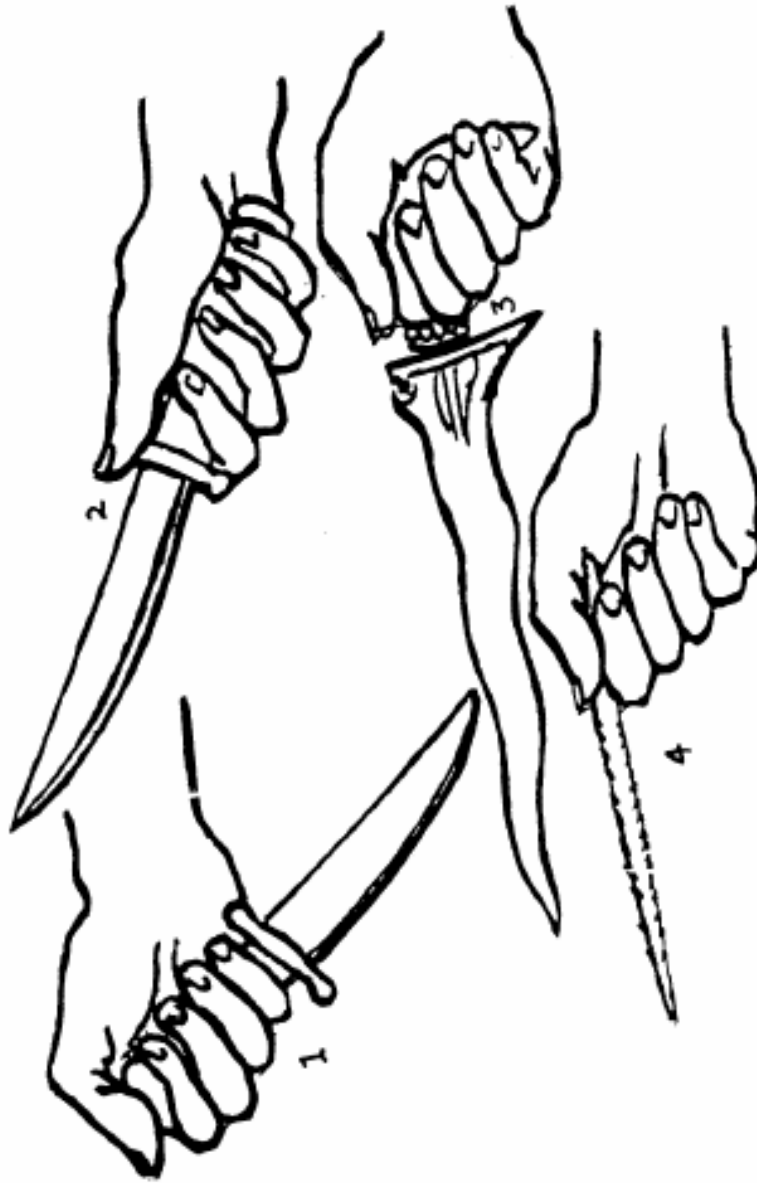
Argensola, writing in 1609 says: "At Menancabo ¹ excellent weapons called creeses ² best weapons in all the Orient."

The *keris* is a rapier in fact. The European rapier is long and needs a long handle to balance it. The *keris* being short, a short handle is enough for its original form; but as men fought, the *keris* became longer and heavier. Two more forms were evolved. First, the Sumatran rapier *keris, k. bahari*; this being long, the handle had to be straightened out to balance it, and it acquired almost the European rapier form; and the secondly, the *sundang*, the Malay broadsword.

The edge of the blade near the hilt, also the *ganja*, are usually dentiform. Part of this ornamental work is called *janggut* and is made in order to catch an opposite blade. Nearer the hilt this work is called *belalai gaja* and *lambai gajah*. In very old *keris* this clearly represents an elephant's trunk and tusk, but is now rather conventionalised. A stone carved in the form of an elephant's trunk was a

¹ Menangkabau

² Keris



3. Dagger grips and *kérís* grip.

favourite motif in Hindu Java. One such stone now in Raffles Museum, has been found on the Johore River, also small ornament of similar shape in earthenware. Another is in Malacca.

This motif was presumably the sign of the elephant god, a symbol of strength and power, and so was considered a lucky thing to have a *keris*, even after its origin was forgotten. It is nearly always found on the blunt side of the *ganja* though occasionally on the sharp side, and *keris* are known that have one on each side.

The old European authors speak of the *keris* as a poisoned weapon. In modern times the *keris* is certainly not poisoned, although many types of *keris*, which were made small to economise iron, were poisoned; but as the *keris* got bigger it

The drawback to use of poison is that has to be continually renewed. Malay vegetable poisons are all wild and difficult to obtain. When the Malays were a village people and their weapon were small, poison was necessary and they obtained it. When the towns were formed, they could not get enough of the poison and found that with bigger and more efficient weapons they did not need it; but the poisons were still available and were used occasionally. D'Albuquerque tells us that when attacking Malacca he lost many men from poisoned arrows and I think there is a basis for both European and Malay stories of poisoned *keris*.

It is know that poison was used in Europe in early times. The Microlith arrowheads were useless without it, and hellebore has been used down the ages for this purpose, and the method cherished as a secret in some families. Payne Galloway tells of the Spanish crossbow bolts, poisoned with hellebore, that, shot into a deer's leg, killed it before it had run two hundred yards. But in Europe, as, I believe, in Malaya, the weapon grew in efficiency until poison became un-

necessary and the method of poisoning became the secret of the witch, or *pawing*.

II. ORIGIN.

What is the origin of a *keris* ? Many people say it came from India, giving as reasons:

- (1) The *keris* is wavy and wavy weapons were used in India.
- (2) The Malays received their early civilisation from India, so the *keris* must have come from there.

I think the *keris* originated in Malaysia. The primitive Malay had no flint, but made various polished and unpolished instruments. These took time and labour and were not good weapons whatever they may have been as tools, but for the Malay fisherman there was a very effective natural weapon for which anyone who has trodden on the sting of an *ikan pari* (sting ray) will vouch. (See *ikan pari*).

Dr. Bianca saw a young man faint from the merest prick of a ray sting he was examining, (vide Gimlette: *Malay Poisons and Charm Cures*) and it must have occurred to some primitive man, that this would be a fine thing to stick into an enemy. The ray sting is garbed down the sides and anyone who held it like a knife and stabbed would poison his own hand and reduce the length of his reach and he would probably break the sting; but if held between the thumb and finger, with the butt against the base of the thumb it could be used with safety and this is the way to hold a small *keris majapahit*. A refinement would be the tying on of a bit of bark cloth. (See Plate 25 No. 2).

I made an experiment and found that when the cloth handle is grasped like a *keris* it resembles the *k. malapahit* hilt. The wielder of such a weapon would not be trying to reach the heart or other vital spot, he would jab and withdraw. His enemy would be paralysed with pain and could easily be finished off.

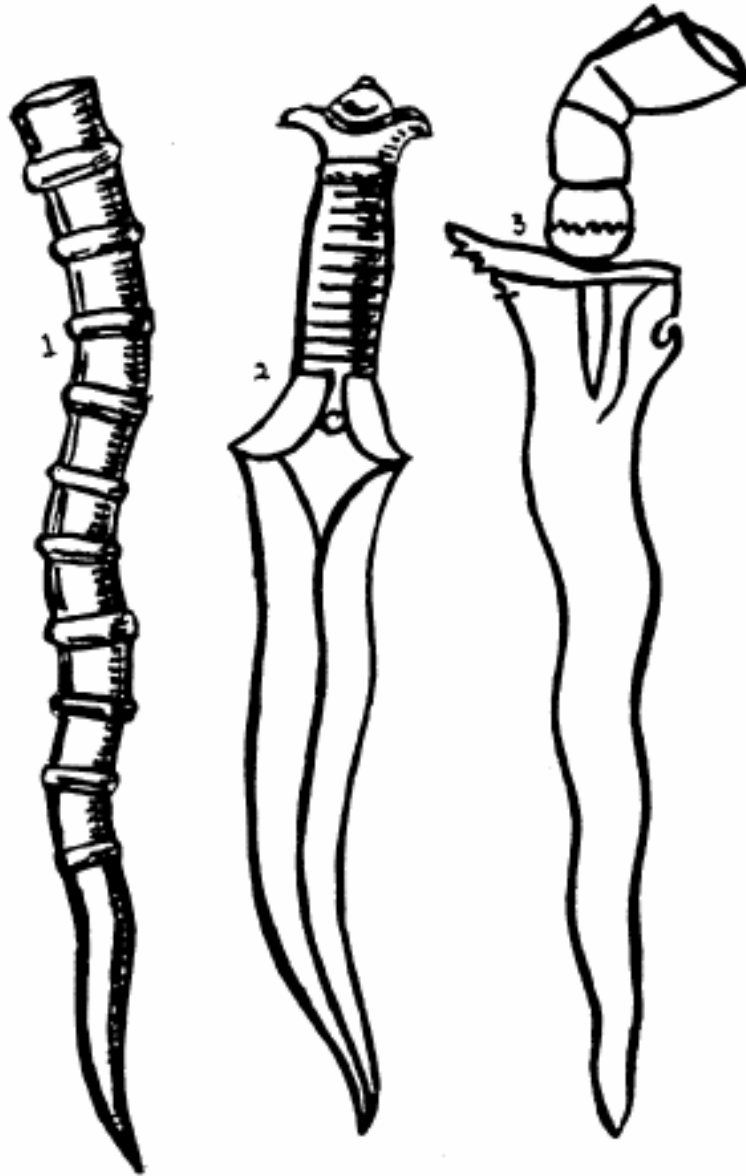
In excavations in the Dutch Indies, of the relics of Stone Age people, many *ikan pari* stings have been found, sometimes five or six days' journey from the sea, which shows that these people had some good use for them. I have no doubt they were used with bark cloth handles as *keris*.

When the poison became stale it could be re-poisoned from a freshly caught ray or from Sakai arrow poisons. The bearer would only have to fight another man naked like himself.

The Malays would first know of metal weapons through trade, and these would be in the form the traders used (whoever they were) but the Malays having learned to work metal might well make blades in the form of the weapons they used to, and a man used to a sting ray *keris* would use a small *k. majapahit* in the same way; a quick jab and withdraw. This, I think, explains the Malay belief that the *k. majapahit* is so venomous.

Most authorities say that the early *keris* was straight and that it only became wavy about the 15th century.

Personally I think the waves (*lok*) came from Indian weapons. The name of *sempana keeling* for a tree waved *keris* suggests this. A primitive Indian weapon that is still used is made from ibex horn, round or split. Steel daggers are also made, imitating the waves of his horn and the Malays may have seen and copied them (see Plate 4). A nicely waved *keris* is very beautiful and has a practical advantage in that it makes a much wider wound and will also work its way in and out among bones where a wider blade would stick. However, all Malays did not take kindly to the wavy *keris*. Many of the older men still say that the straight blade is the best, and certainly more blades seem to be made straight than wavy; that is among blades that are made use. The globe-trotter always wants a wavy blade and they are made for him.



4. 1. Ibex horn. 2. Sinuous dagger. 3. *Kōris*.

III. THE BLADE.

The first iron workers and *keris* makers in Malaya were called *pandai besi*. They were supposed to be verse in magic, and to have a secret which enable them to govern this metal ¹. They were also makers of *k. pichit*, *q.v.* These *pandai* were often made Governors of Provinces.

The manufacture of arms was brought to its highest degree of perfection in the reign of the second prince of Majapahit. A.D. 1300; when the first damascened *keris* (*k. herpamor*) were made by the *pandai besi* from Pajajeram.

The older *keris majapahit* seem to have been made by welding together small bars of iron, like knitting needles, so that the pamor resembled hair.

This I think explains the story that the hair of the girl dedicated to the *keris* can be seen in the blade ². As a matter of fact the hair-like structure usually extends through the hilt. The early *pandai besi* could not make real steel, but found by experiment that iron needles, welded together in this way, were much stronger than plain iron. Later the Arabs taught them to make damascened patterns. (See Plate 5).

According to Malay tradition a *keris* must be made of the least two kinds of iron, and a good *keris* of seven kinds. The *keris* must be made of at last two kinds of iron, and a good *keris* of seven kinds. The *keris* of Hang Tuah, the hero of Malacca history, was of twenty kinds, and these had been obtained from many places, from Bali to Stamboul.

As I have mentioned elsewhere, iron was at one time a rare and therefore costly metal. It played a great part in sorcery and was at one time regarded as

¹ See Pawang Salleh's Story of the making of the *k. majapahit*, p43.

² See Legends and Superstitions.



Photo. F. J. Traversin

5. Kéris blades showing papor.

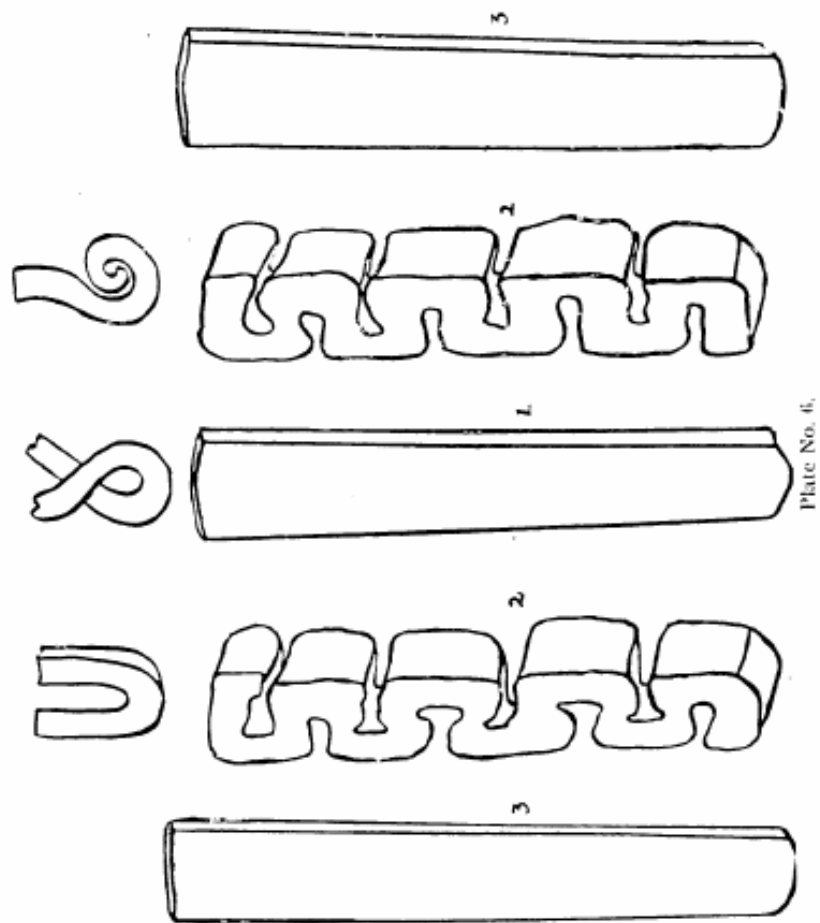
talismanic; *sumpah minum ayer besi* means to take an oath by drinking water in which iron has been placed.

K. berpamor is a *keris* with a damascened blade. The word *pamor* means alloyed or mixed; and indicates that the iron is mixed with nickel, hence meteoric. Iron seems to have been known first in Java in the meteoric form, whence its rarity and supposed talismanic value, as shown in the cult of certain weapons. At later date when purer iron (*besi khersani*) was imported in the ship from the Persian Gulf, a certain amount of meteoric iron was still worked up in the *keris* to give magical properties, the magic coming out in lucky marks, *bunga pamor*, made by the nickel. Much later, in Java, the makers of *keris* had enough control of their materials to make ornamental damasks. Indeed damask now can be made by the use of pure nickel, but this lacks the *tuwah* or talismanic virtue attaching to the meteoric iron.

Newbolt writing about 1800 says *besi pamor*, damasked iron, was brought from the Celebes and Java and mixed with the iron from old hoops, nails and a sort of iron from Billiton, one-fourth of the *besi pamor* to three-fourths of the other iron. He also says that the art of inlaying a *keris* with gold was no longer known in Malacca, but in Palembang, Siag, Pontianak and Rengganu there were able workers in the craft.

The Malay smith's tools are simple, but he can do very clever work with them. He uses a forge, an anvil, hammers, chisels and files, also a characteristic tool called *lepa*. This is a cold chisel fixed at right angles in a long handle.

To make a *keris* he first makes a number of small bars. There is always a central plate of steel, that in the finished *keris* forms the edge. On each side of this is a layer of *besi pamor* made of iron bars welded together, then beaten into a sort of Greek key pattern (see Plate 6 No.2). It is then covered with a piece of mild steel. These plates are welded together. Two or more pieces shaped in one



6. The making of a *keris* blade. 1. Central plate of steel which form edge of finished weapon. 2. Bars of *besi pamor* welded on either side of No. 1. 3. Bars of steel welded on either side of the 1 & 2 combination. 4, 5 & 6 Bars of *besi pamor* welded on top in form guard.

of the form shown in Plate 6 Nos. 4, 5 & 6, are welded on to the hilt end is beaten up to form a tang. The cut-off piece is formed into a guard and punched to receive the tang, and welded in place.

The blade of the *keris* is now shaped. If the *keris* is to be wavy (*berlok*) it is bent. The blade is heated, the parts which are not to be bent are rapidly water-cooled, then the blade is placed edgeways the ends supported by blocks, and is hammered on the uncooled portions.

A separate heating and hammering is needed for each wave. In some *keris* especially those made in Patani, the waves are made by filing and grinding, but usually only in *keris melela* or *besi bari*¹ as the beauty of the *pamor* is spoilt if it does not follow the waves.

The blade is now ground or filed to its final shape. In the process the outer layer of mild steel is removed and the *keris* blade is tempered.

The *keris* blade is next laid in a trough containing boiling rice water, sulphur and salt, for three or four days. This blackens the steel but scarcely touches the iron. It attacks the marks of the welds, which show as tiny etched lines. When this damascened pattern is clear, the blade is cleaned with lime juice.

¹ Bari. I cannot trace this word. In Kelantan, Mr Gardner found it in verbal use. I have not seen it written. The meaning is said to be 'rough' Ed.



Photo. J. J. Deussen

7. Balinese *kēris* hilts.

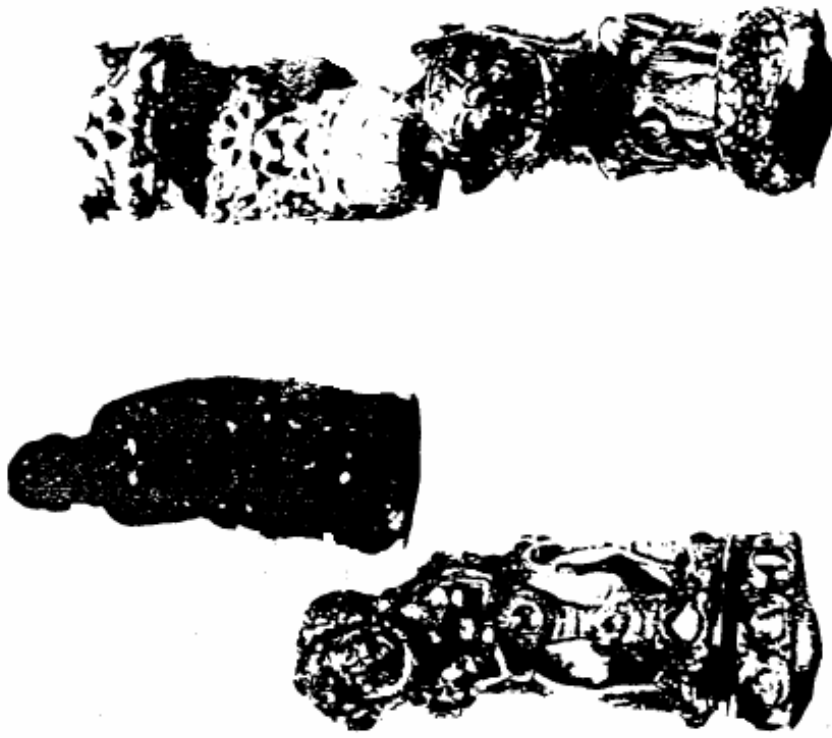


Photo L. J. Brown.

8. Balinese *Korymbi* hills.

IV. THE HILT

The blade is fixed into the hilt by forcing the hot tang into the hole prepared for it and filled with glue (*jabong*) made of damar and oil. In modern days gramophone records, crushed and melted are used, or a piece of rag is twisted around the tang; but in the latter case the *keris* is not for use.

A *keris* is usually of wood, but metal, ivory or bone are also used (see Plate 9).

Most *keris* have hilts carved in the shape of figures. Since all old *keris* that are *bertuwah* are thought to have an indwelling spirit (*semangat*)¹ I fancy that a carved hilt would be considered more or less likely to please this spirit. Now Islam forbids the making or use of images, and as the influence of Islam grew, the use of images was discouraged; but the feeling was that they were lucky, and so, disguised enough to fulfil the letter of the law, they were still used.

Plate 9 No. 6 shows a Malay *keris* hilt where the figure is very distinct, but has no face. This omission is probably from religious motives, since, as it had no face it had not the image of a living thing; at the same time it had a body to be inhabited by a *semangat*.

Some *keris*, especially those made in Bali and Madura, have most beautifully carved figures and hilts. These may be of wood, ivory, gold, silver or iron. The figures are usually grotesque of the *wayang kulit* type.

A *keris* with a gold hilt is called *k. ulu kenchana*, *k. harubi*, *k. merubi* or *k. bawang sa-bongkol*. The Sultan of Malacca made a law that only people of royal blood might have gold hilted *keris*, but as in later times this law was not observed, a gold sheath was substituted as the distinctive sign of royalty.

A metal cup on the hilt of a *keris* is called *pendongkok* (see Plate No. 2).

¹ See p.37.



1. Wood. 2. Wood and metal. 3. Silver. 4. Ivory (elephant).
5. Ivory (fish). 6. Bone.
9. *Kerris* hilts.

There are many types of hilt.

- (1) The *Sundang* (see Plate 10 No.1)
- (2) The Bali type (see Plate 10 No.3)
- (3) The *java demon* or *raja demon* (see Plate 10 No.5 & 10)
- (4) The Patani type (see Plate 10 No.6)
- (5) The Flower or Madura type (see Plate 10 No.7)
- (6) The *majapahit* type (see Plate 10 No.9)
- (7) The Bugis type (see Plate 10 No.2)
- (8) The *bahari* Bali type (see Plate 10 No.8)

(1) The *Sundang* type.

As the *keris* became longer and heavier it was used to slash with and the hilt was changed to give a better grip. Also as Malay weapons are fixed to the hilts with a round tang, which is excellent for thrusting, but not for cutting, one or more silver bands (*sigi*) were put on to prevent the blade turning in the hilt.

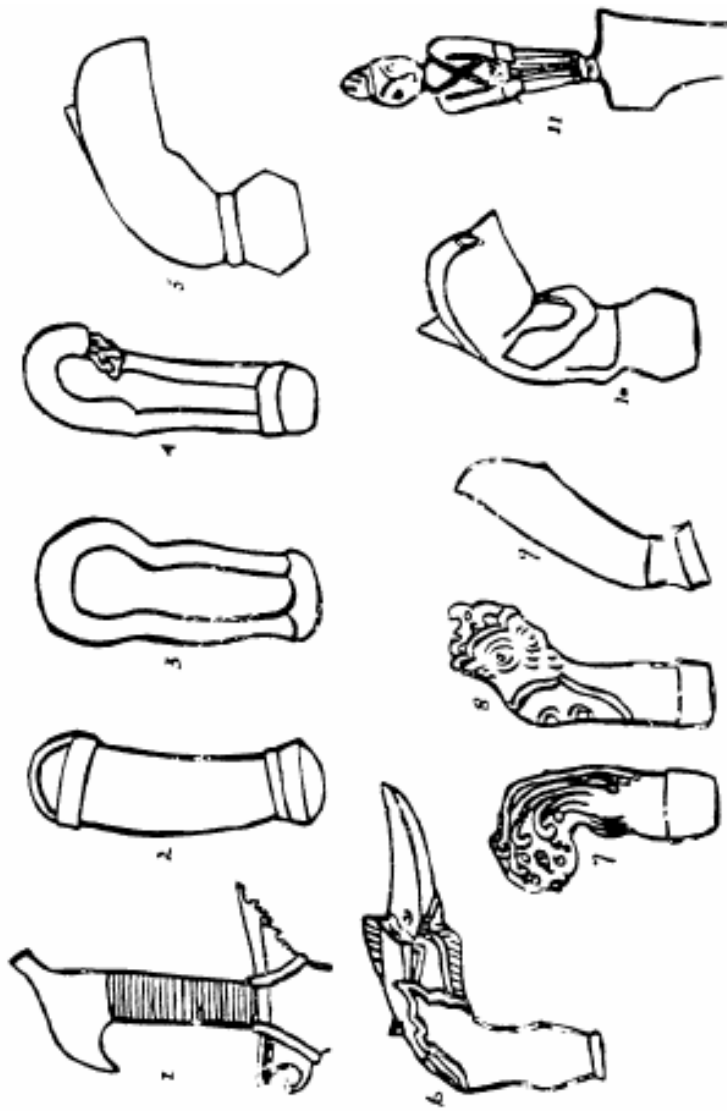
These are recognised as the distinguishing mark of the *sundang*.

(2) The Bali type.

Many of the *keris* from Bali have a figure of a god called Arana or Ravana for the hilt, obviously of Hindu origin. Other that are very old have a figure of a man or god who is obviously naked, almost phallic, and I think most likely this is a god.

(3) the *jawa demam*.

The legend is as follows: A certain raja called his *panja besi* and ordered him to make a *keris* hilt that was unlike any other, or lose his life. The *keris* maker not think what to do, but as night came on, it grew cold and the raja who had fever (*demam*) pulled his sarong up, and hugged himself to keep warm. Then the *keris* maker carved a hilt in his likeness. That, at any rate is the story; but I think the use of a figure is to give luck to the *keris*.



10. *Kärvis* hilts.
 4. Soudang. 2 & 3. Bali type. 4. Javanese type, pistol grip. 5. *Jawa d'émoro* type, Sumatra. 6. Tatanu type, *Andar p'akabac*. 7. *Jaduria* flower type. 8. *K. bakari*. 9. *Budak* hilt. 10. Northern type, *juca d'émoro*. 11. Detail of *K. mapupahit* hilt.

(4) The Patani type: *k. kulu Pekakak*.

The hilt developed is a big head with such a long nose that it has been mistaken for a kingfisher, but it is really intended to be human, and there will often be found tiny arms clasped round the body.

(5) The Flower or Madura type.

In the Javanese Flower type is often found a little head and arms. Sometimes only eyes and hair are shown.

(6) The *majapahit*.

This is the earliest type of *keris* known, and has a hilt in the shape of a little man or god. Hilt and blade are forged from a single piece of iron.

(7) The Bugis type.

This is very plain and is made so that the *keris* can easily be used like a dagger (see Plate 10 No. 2) as well as with the true *keris* grip.

(8) The *bahari* type.

The hilt of the *k. Bahari* is of horn, usually beautifully carved. It is sometimes, though rarely of silver, or fish ivory. In Johore a number of these are to be found, either with rough uncarved wooden hilts of the traditional shape, or with ordinary Malay hilts usually of the *jawa demam* type. They frequently have sheaths of the Northern Malay type but which have been made specially for them as blade and sheath fit exactly. In these cases, it would appear that the original sheath after his own ideas. It may be that an ignorant dealer has fitted a blade with a wrong hilt or sheath but I have known many Malays who cherish ancestral *k. bahari* to which these unusual accessories have been fitted.



11



12

Kérís hilts.

11. 1. *Jawa démam*. 1a. *Jawa démam* (Sumatran). 2. *K. bahari*. 2a. *K. bahari* (silver). 3. Bugis. 4. Javanese. 5. Madura. 6. Malay.
12. 1. *Hulu pékakak*. 2. *Jawa démam*. 2a. *Jawa démam* (Sumatran). 3. *Majapahit*. 4. *Bahari*. 5. Madura figure type. 5a. Madura flower type. 6. Javanese pistol grip. 6a. Javanese jewel-studded copper-gilt. 7. Balinese figure. 7a. Same as 7, but of carved and painted wood.

V. THE SHEATH.

Sheaths are usually pegged together and glued. Some have the lower part bound with twine.

In modern times the *sampir* often works loose and, catching on the *ganja* comes out with it. One is told that this is intentional, and that the *sampir* is meant to form a guard, but there is not the slightest truth in this. Formerly the *sampir* was kept carefully glued in place, in order to prevent the sheath slipping through the belt and being lost. Formerly a *keris* often had a loop of silk cord or *rotan* on the sheath by which it was attached to the belt (*tuli-tuli*). This might have a gold, silver or gilt button loop ornament, *batir-batir* (see Plate 17).

The principal types of sheath are:-

- (1) The Northern type.
- (2) The Balinese type.
- (3) The Madura type.
- (4) The *bahari* type.
- (5) The *Bugis* type.
- (6) The Javanese type.
- (7) The Kelantan type.

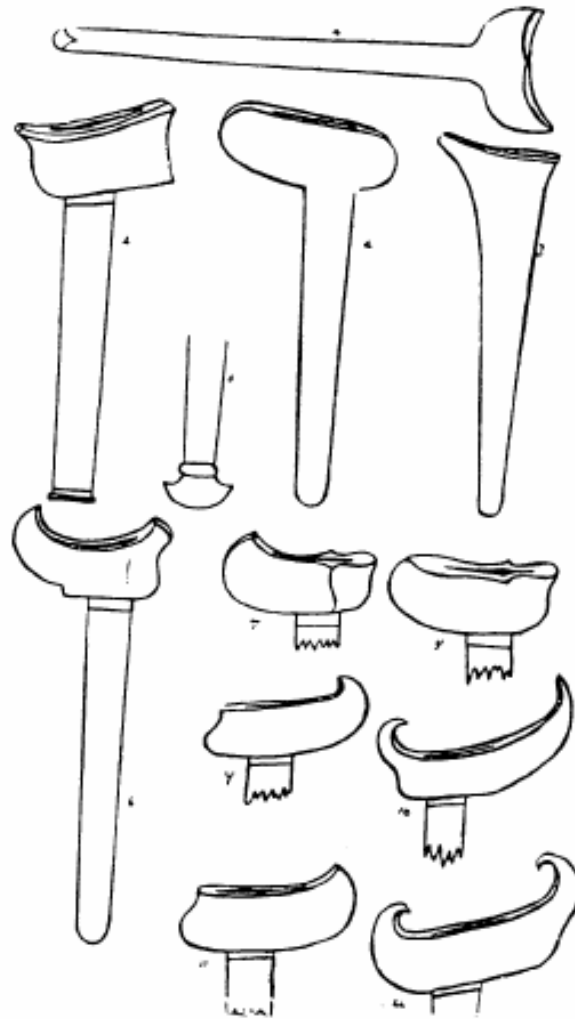
(1) The Northern type.

This comes from Perak and Malaya generally, had rather a plain cross-piece (*sampir*) with square top edges. The lower end of sheath (*buntunt*) is square and often made of fish ivory.

(2) The Balinese type.

The *sampir* and lower end are usually rounded (see Plate 13 Nos. 2 and 3).

If the lower part of the sheath (*buntunt*) is encased in metal it is called *buntunt pendok*.

13. *Këris* sheaths.

1. Northern type: square *sampir* and *buntut*; if *buntut* as No. 5. Bugis.
2. Bali and Madura type.
3. Bali type.
4. *K. bahari*; if cased in silver often has square *buntut* as No. 1.
5. Javanese type.
- 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Javanese.
- All have rounded *sampir*.
12. Këlantan. Has rounded *buntut* unless cased in silver, when it is square as in No. 1.

(3) The Madura type.

This often has a round grotesque face on a *sampir* (see Plate 13 No. 3)

(4) The *bahari* type.

The tip is usually rounded (see Plate 13 No. 4) but if cased in silver often has a square tip as in Plate 13 No. 1.

(5) The *Bugis* type.

See Plate 13 No. 5.

(6) The Javanese type.

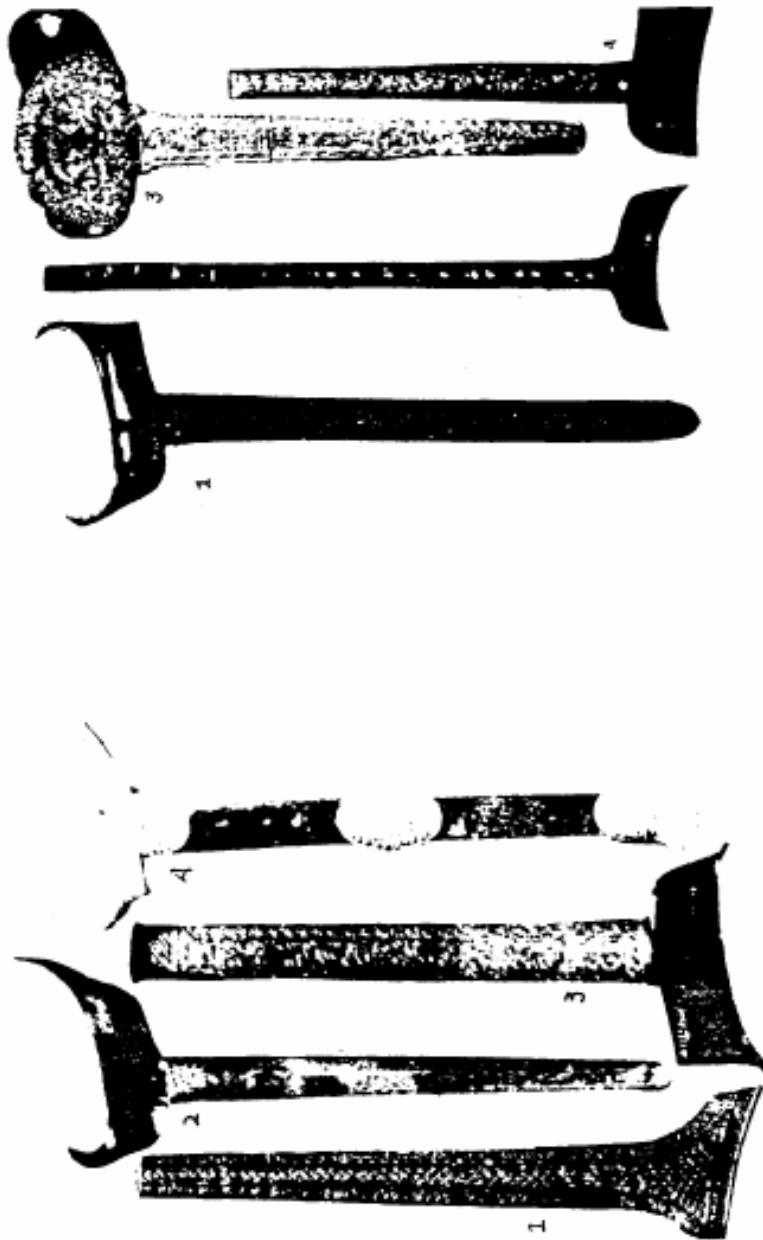
This has a flamboyant *sampir* with a rounded tip. It often has the sheath enclosed in metal, sometimes with a slit down the front to show the wood of the sheath. This slit may be filled in with tortoise-shell. If a metal sheath has no slit it is called *buntu*; if it has a slit, *tapeh*; if the slit is closed at the top *selarak*.

(7) The Kelantan type.

This is very like the Java type. The tips of the *sampir* are inclined to be more curved. These sheaths are often made of a single piece of wood without a join. (See Plate 15 No. 1).

Many sheath are encased in silver very beautifully worked. These are often made for sale to Europeans; and there is quite a trade fitting *keris* blades with silver sheaths for this purpose. If a weapon has a poor blade, a poorly carved hilt and a silver sheath, avoid it.

To the Malay the blade is the most important thing, then the hilt, and lastly the sheath. If he has the money he will have a good hilt before he put silver on the sheath. A man be hard up, and put a poor blade in a good sheath in order to sell at a high price.



14. 1. Balinese. 2. Javanese.
3. Northern. 4. Bugis.

15. 1. Kélantan. 2. K. Achari.
3. Madura. 4. Northern.

Kérís sheaths.

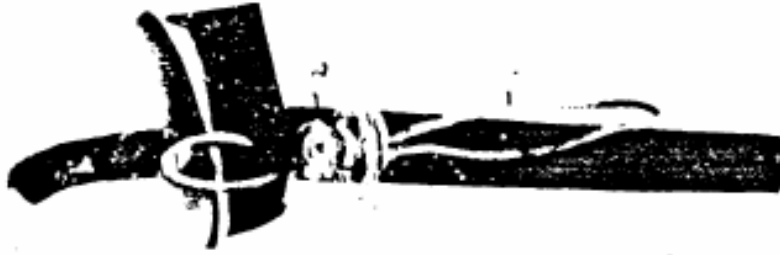
Avoid all Malay silver, *keris* sheaths or otherwise, that has a design of two crossed *keris*, or a *keris* and a sheath crossed. That is to catch globe trotters and is nearly always made by Chinese, though Kelantan Malays have copied it from them in the past few years. They are made to sell only to Europeans.

A gold casing is called *k. terpang* if it only covers the lower part of the sheath leaving the *sampir* exposed; if this is also covered it is called *k. terpang gabus*. Gold sheathed *keris* were the prerogative of royalty in Malacca.

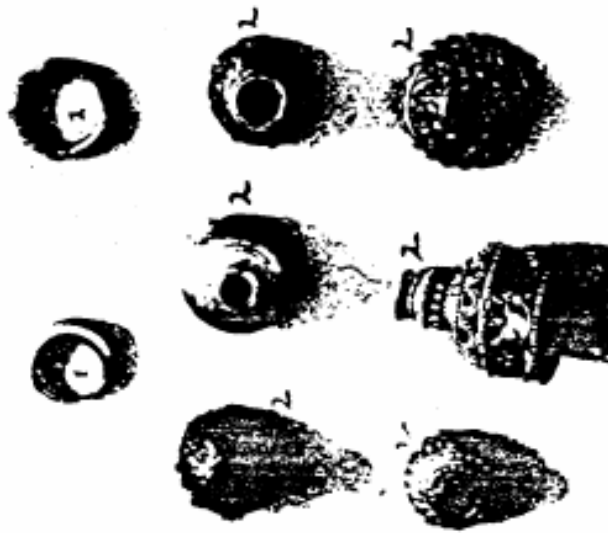
KERIS RINGS

Chinchin melawan or *chin panchar kenyang*. (See Plate 16 No. 1).

If a Keris, especially one of the short hilted type, struck someone hard (e.g. a bone) the hand was likely to be injured by contact with the top of the *aring*. A large ring was therefore worn on the forefinger; any large ring would serve but special rings were made with one side very thick. These are becoming rare and are worth collecting.



17. 1. *Tuli-tuli*.
2. *Batir-batir*.



16. 1. *Chinchi melasau; Keris rings*.
2. *Pëndangkok*.

VI CLASSIFICATION

One is shown a flimsy fish sting set into a handle, a large sword, a sort of rapier, and various double and single edged daggers and all sorts of intermediate shapes and told that they are all *keris*.

It must be remembered that weapons are apt to change in 2000 years with new methods and wants. English swords have changed as much in the same time, and the various stages in the evolution of the *keris* can be clearly seen.

According to Malays there are five classes of *keris*.

- a. Those from the Northern States of Malaya and Patani.
- b. Those from Rembau.
- c. Javanese.
- d. Bugis.
- e. Sumatran.

They are said to classify them according to:

- (1) The *pamor*.
- (2) The iron.
 - (1) The shape of the blade.
 - (1) The hilt

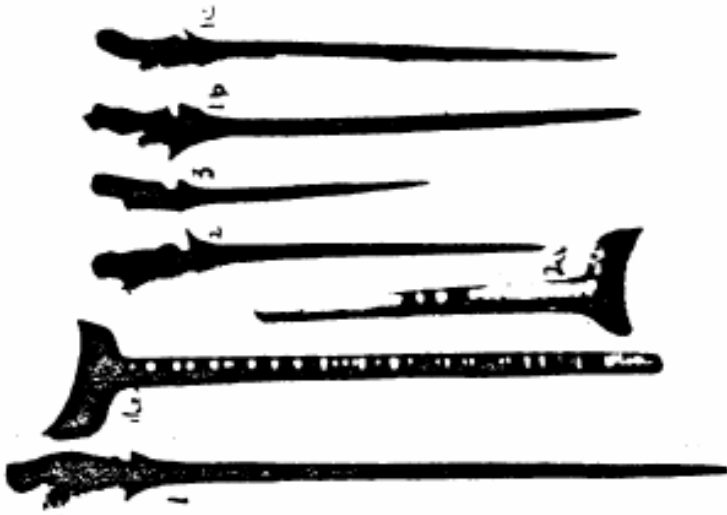
They recognise however that an old *keris* has probably many hilts in its time.

All Malay weapons if made of metal are divided into three classes, *berpamor* if damascened or laminated, *meleda* if plain steel, and *besi bari* if rough steel (like sandpaper).

In practice, the Malays to whom I have shown my 400 *keris* seem to be guided by the shape of the hilt and sheath. A *keris* with a Javanese hilt was said by one Malay to be Javanese, although six month before he had recognised the same blade as Bugis, because I showed it to him with a Bugis hilt; or Patani if I



19. Kéris sumpuna.



18. 1 & 1a. K. panjang and sheath.
1b & 1c. K. panjang. 2 & 2a. K. alang.
3. K. pendek.

showed it to him then with a Patani hilt. Patani *keris* with *jawa deman* hilts will be said to be Javanese because the Java and Patani sheaths are very much alike. I have no doubt there are expert who can tell the *keris* by the iron, etc. but as each Malay I have consulted during the last thirty years has told me different things about the same *keris* I am puzzled.

Many smell a blade saying that they can tell where a *keris* is made by the smell. Others put it to the ear, and say that the blade will tell where it was made. If the listener has the proper power. They do not ring the blade, but hold it to the ear and listen to the sound they say it makes.

It may be possible for some of them to tell the origin of a individual *keris* by occult means, but I have tried marking the blades and putting different hilts on, and the answers are always according to the hilt, sheath, etc.

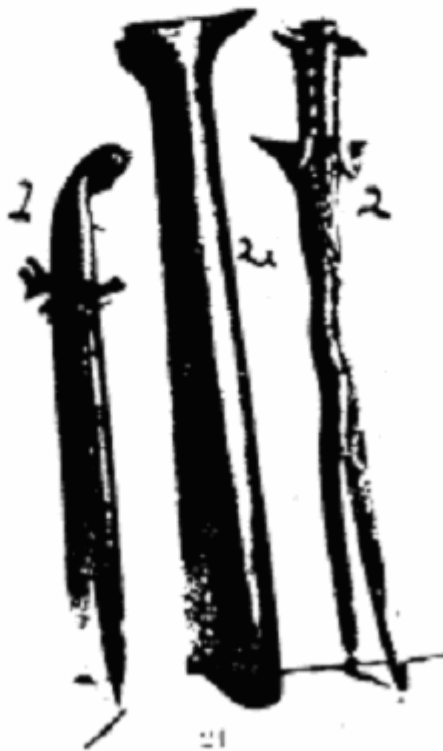
There are said to masters who will speak to the *keris* saying in turn all the likely names of the places at which it may have been made and at the proper name the *keris* will stand up, but I have not been able to find such a master.

I think the best way to list *keris* is as follows:

- (1) *Keris sempana*. The ordinary *keris*, straight or wavy.
- (2) *Keris panjang* or *k. bahari*. The Sumatran rapier *keris* (execution *keris*).
- (3) *Sundang* (the Malay broadsword).
- (4) *Tumbok lada* (pepper crusher) so called from the shape of the hilt.
- (5) *Badek*.
- (6) *Keris majapahit*, with is Javanese.
- (7) *Keris pichit* (finger pressed *keris*).
- (8) *Keris ikan pari*.



20



21

20. 1 & 1a. Straight keris and sheath. 2. Same as 1. 3 & 3a. K. sempana keeling and sheath. 4 & 4a. Keris of 5 waves and sheath: k. sempana or k. parong sari. 5. Keris of 7 waves, names as 4. 6. Keris of 9 waves; k. cherita. 7. Keris of 11 waves; k. tambang serai. 8. Keris of 15 waves, names as 7. 9. Keris of 21 waves.
21. 1. Keris with pistol barrels (see text). 2 & 2a. Sunding and sheath.

(1) This is called by many names; as *keris sopukul* if straight, *kelok* if wavy. The waves (*lok*) in Malay *keris* are always uneven in number, every wave on each side is counted; so a *keris* with a single bend is counted as having three *lok*. If it has three *lok* it is called *keris sempana keeling*, if five or seven, *k. sempana* or *k. parong sari*. If nine or more *keris cherita*. If a *keris* has thirteen or fifteen *lok* it is sometimes called *keris tambang serat*.

I have a *keris* with thirty-one waves, which is the greatest number I have seen, but Leonard Wray speaks of one with forty-seven.

(1) *Keris sempana*. The ordinary *keris*, straight or wavy.

(2) *Keris panjang* or *k. bahari*.

This is a Sumatran rapier *keris* called the execution *keris*. If long it is called *k.panjang*, if medium *k. alang*, and if short *k. pendek*.

It has a characteristic hilt (see Plate 18) and one can usually be certain that it comes from either Sumatra or Menangkabau, the people of which are Sumatran. It was made primarily for fighting and was used incidentally for executions.

The usual Malay mode of execution was *salang* or slaying with a *keris*. The victim was made to squat and the executioner drove the *k. panjang* from a certain spot (*tempat penggalan*) inside his collar bone down into his heart. This execution was carried out quickly or slowly according to the sentence. The *keris* was driven through cotton wool so that the blood was soaked up, since only the ruler could cause blood to be shed.

¹ Another method of execution was strangling (*kujut*) with a cord or bow-string. The term *kujut* is sometimes used for hanging by pulling the body upwards instead of in modern way of breaking the neck by the drop.

² Executions were sometimes carried out by blowing from a gun, *bunuh de-mulut meriam*.



22. *Tumbuk lada*.
1, 2, 4 & 5. Silver mounted *tumbuk lada* and sheaths. 3. 18 in. *tumbuk lada*
with wooden handle.

(3) *Sundang*.

The *sundang* is a two edged and may be straight or sinuous. It has the *ganja*, *aring*, and other features of the *keris* but has its own peculiar type of hilt and has almost lost its point. It has the *lambai gajah* and *belalai gajah* q.v. (See Plate 21 No. 2).

In the Philippines it is simply called a *keris*.

(4) *Tumbok lada*.

The *tumbok lada* has a slightly curved blade, with a single edge on the concave side of the blade. The hilt is always in the same plane as the blade instead of at right angles to it, as with the true *keris*.

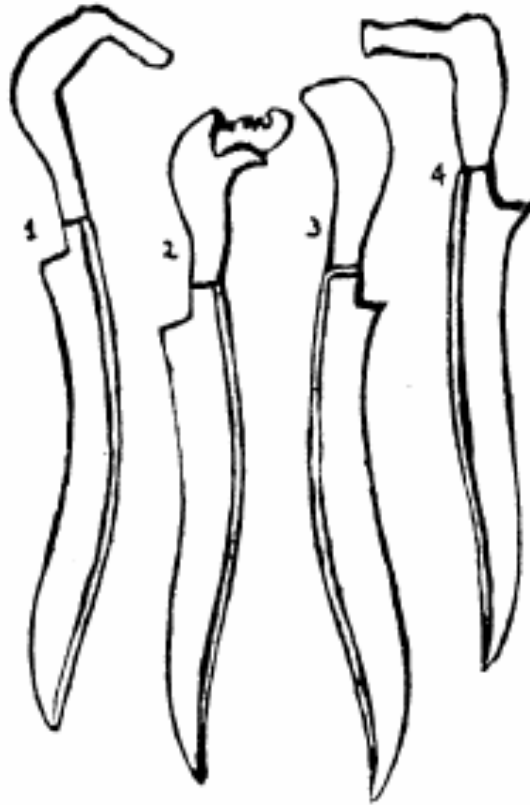
It is intended primarily for stabbing, as is a *keris* proper, but is also used as a knife. It is usually from six to ten inches long, but I have specimens eighteen inches long. (See Plate 22 No. 3.).

The hilt is distinctive and is usually thought to give it its name. *Tumbok* means to crush or pound. Some people say that the shape of the hilt resembles the pestle used to crush pepper corns; other say that the victim when stabbed in the stomach with a *tumbok lada*, has a burning sensation as if he had eaten pepper. I think this is perhaps an understatement.

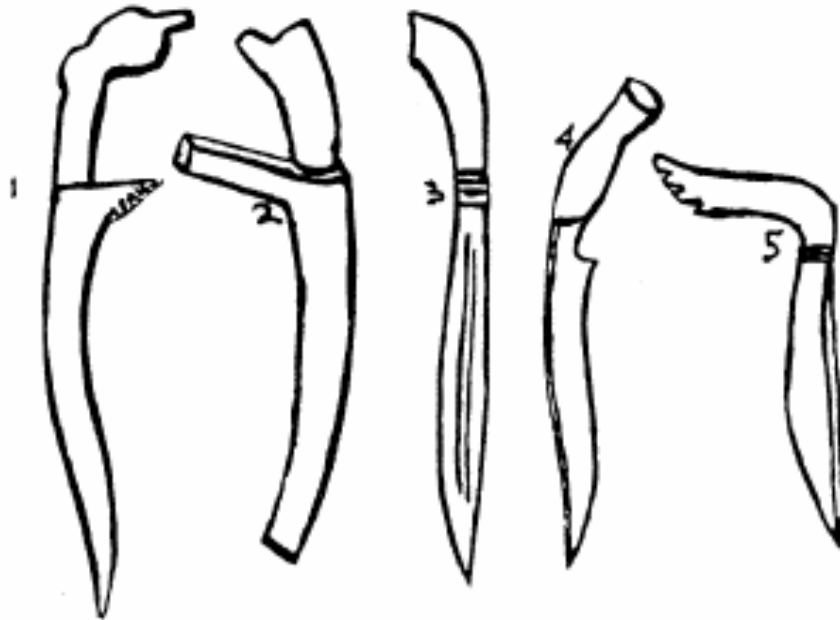
In Patani, a *tumbok lada* is called a *badek*. Also many Malay shown a knife the name of which they do not know will call it *badek*.

In Menangkabau and Negri Sembilan where the wearing of the *keris* is limited to the major chiefs, the *tumbok lada* is the ceremonial weapon of minor chiefs. In Perak and Selangor it is smaller and rather despised as a woman's weapon, 'a pepper crusher,' and associated with underhand blows, being easily hidden and used unexpectedly against the softer parts of the body.

Sewar: a *tumbok lada* with a different hilt but used in the same way, i.e. for thrusting. (See Plates 23 & 24).



23



24

23. 1 & 2. Renchong acheb. 3. Sesar. 4. Renchong.
 24. 1. Sumatran sewar. 2. Sumatran sewar in sheath. 3. Sumatran badek.
 4. Sumatran sewar. 5. Javanese badek.

The *renchong acheb* is also a *tumbok lada* with a different hilt. It is also worn as dress weapon in places where a *keris* would not usually be worn; but it can be used with great effect as ripping knife. (See Plate 25).

(5) *Badek*.

This type of *keris* is really a dagger with a hilt in the plane of the blade and not at right angles to it, as in a true *keris*. It has a small, straight, usually single-edged blade, with a straight or concave edge; (See Plate 26).

It differs from the *tumbok lada* in that the blade is of even width, while the *tumbok lada* tapers to the point. The hilt also, is of a different type. The *tumbok lada* has a wide back in section like an old-fashioned razor, while the *badek* in section is like a table knife.

The *badek* while usually single edged has something a false edge, and is occasionally two-edged. The *tumbok lada* has only one edge.

(6) *K. majapahit*.

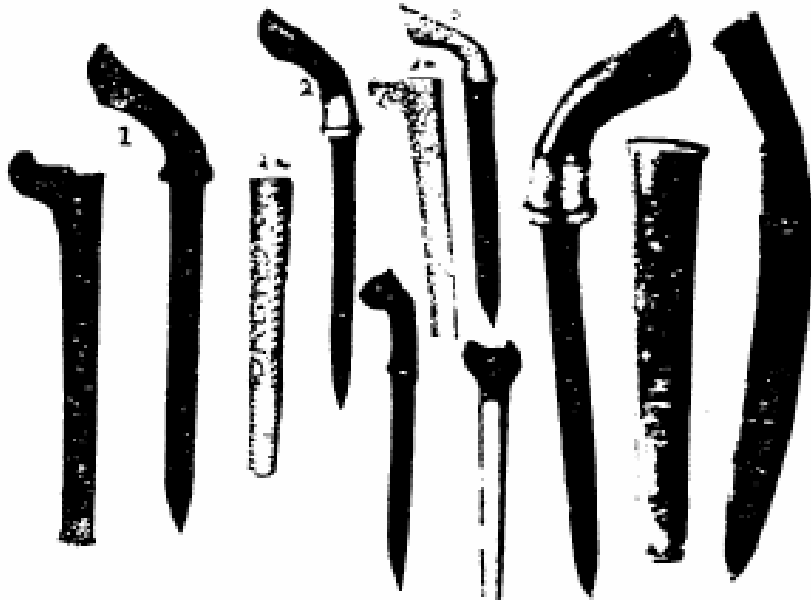
The type called *majapahit* is the earliest metal *keris* know. The traditional form is a straight narrow thin blade of black iron.

The name suggests that it came from Majapahit in Java, the little stat that conquered most of the Malay world in the 13th century, but Dr. van Stein Callenfels, the Dutch archaeologist, tells me that it belongs to the earliest iron age in Java about the 7th century A.D. and that scarcely anything is know about it.

Malay writings says it should be shaped like, and as thin as, a blade of *lalang* (coarse grass). The blade and guard are forged of a single piece of iron (*ganja iras*). The hilt is a figure of a man with a more or less bowed head, usually wearing a hat or some sort of headdress. Some Malays say that this figure can be male or female, the big ones being male and the small ones females; other say



25



26

25. 1 & 1a. Swear. 2 & 2a. Sumatran *tumbok lada* and sheath. 3 & 3a. *Renchong Acheb* and sheath. 4. Sewar.
26. 1 & 1a *Badel* (old) and sheath. 2 & 2a. Silver mounted *badek* and sheath. 3 & 3a. Silver hilted *badek* and sheath. 4. Unusual type of hilt and sheath. 5 & 5a. Old *badek* and sheath. 6. *badek*.

that those showing the necklace are male and those without, female. All agree that they are very poisonous, the usual saying is the depth of the white of a nail is enough to kill with a *majapahit*. It is possible that 600 years rust is in itself poisonous.

Some of them seem to date from a time when iron was a rare and precious thing. I have several whose length averages 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches of which the blade is 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches and the handle is 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. They range from this up to 10 inches in length.

When iron became more plentiful *keris* were made bigger; but that all early *keris* were small is. I think proved by the fact that the name of Sang Puna is recorded in Malay history as that of the first smith to make *keris* 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ palms in length.

Some are quite heavy and sturdy but the blades of the older ones are thin and flimsy. However, used as the *k. ikan pari* is used, a quick jab and withdraw, while the poison does the work, they would be very deadly. They must have been used to thrust and withdraw as a rapier is used; any sideways strain would have broken the thin blade as it would that of a *k. ikan pari* q.v. The Malay is quick and agile and the rapier type of weapon is ideal for him.

Keris majapahit are supposed to bring luck to their owners, but some say a *keris majapahit* is only lucky if it is acquired by inheritance or by chance; that luck is not acquired with a bought *keris*.

A famous *pawing*, Salleh, tells me that a *k. majapahit jantan* (male) was made by a male smith. When finished it was tempered by being made red hot and cooled by being drawn under his armpit, then thrown forward into water. A *k. majapahit perempuan* (female) was made by a female *pandai* and received its



27



28

27. 1. Early *k. majapit*. 2. Slightly later *k. majapit*. 3. Later and heavier *k. majapit*. 4. Later and sinuous blade. 5. Unusual variant. 6. Early *k. pichit*. 7. Later *k. pichit*. 8. *Pichit* with *majapit* hilt (possible forgery).
28. 1. Rare type *k. pichit*. 2 & 3. Trenggaan forgeries of *majapahit - pichit*. 4. Detail of *majapahit* hilt..