



77. The "Kingfisher" Type of Kris

Author(s): H. Louis

Source: *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 30 (1900), pp. 78-79

Published by: [Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2842712>

Accessed: 15/06/2014 19:46

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

not have quoted them. It is sometimes urged that because certain customs or beliefs are similar to those in adjacent countries, or even in far-off lands, there is no need to reproduce them; this is a very unscientific position. In all branches of science a vast amount of tedious and apparently unprofitable work has to be done before generalisation can be safely made, and we should offer our hearty thanks to original investigators like Mr. Skeat, who are content to laboriously collect and sift information, and then to publish it in a straightforward manner, enriched with local knowledge and unvitiating by strivings to support original or other theories. The critical labour which Mr. Blagden has expended in seeing the work through the press also deserves our warm thanks.

A few more explanatory notes might have been offered; for example, the reason why bamboo shoots were tabooed to Princess Rimbut (p. 152) was because the caltrops that previously wounded her were made of bamboo. It is a pity the word "armadillo" should have been used on p. 154, as that name should be confined to the South American edentate.

The book begins with creation-myths, both of the world and of man; not only have human beings souls, but so have natural objects as well. Usually the soul resembles the body, but the soul of the eagle-wood is thought to take the shape of a bird, the soul of tin-ore that of a buffalo. We naturally pass on to the magician or individual accredited with supernatural powers, who can deal directly with the souls or essences of men and bodies on the one hand, and with the unseen powers on the other. Mr. Skeat makes the suggestive statement that "the evidence of folk-lore, taken in conjunction with that supplied by charm books and romances, goes to show that the greater gods of the Malay Pantheon, though modified in some respects by Malay ideas, were really borrowed Hindu divinities, and that only the lesser gods and spirits are native to the Malay religions system." The influence of Islamism is also very apparent, and many undoubtedly Malay pagan charms terminate with the Islam formula.

A large series of magic rites and formulæ are given in connection with the wind and weather, animals, vegetation, and minerals, water, fishing, and fire. The life of man is hedged in with magical rites, and we learn from Mr. Skeat what has to be done at birth, adolescence, betrothal, marriage and death. Most of the illustrations are from specimens in the splendid collection that Mr. Skeat presented three years ago to the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. A. C. H.

Malay Kris.

Louis.

77 The "*Kingfisher*" type of *Kris*. Communicated by Professor H. Louis, M.A., to the Anthropological Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Bradford, September 10th, 1900. (With Plate I-J.)

This paper described a peculiar pattern of *Kris*, which is used in a limited area in the north-east of the Malay Peninsula. The Malay legend of its origin is that a party of Malays from the Bugis Islands invaded that portion of the Peninsula many centuries ago. One of their leaders was known as "the Kingfisher," presumably on account of his rapid movements. The invasion was successful, but the leader fell in one of the last engagements, and after his death his followers carved their *kris*-handles into shapes resembling the Kingfisher's head and beak. Under Chinese influence the pattern became more and more ornate, until it reached the present fixed type.

The writer discovered in a pawnshop in Bangkok an earlier form of this type,

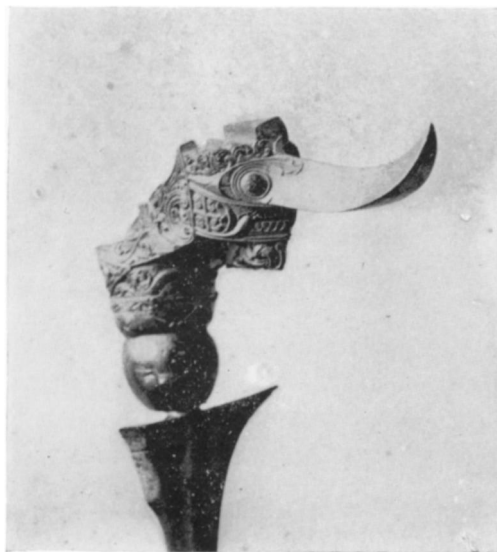


FRONT VIEW.



BACK VIEW.

(*Miscellanea*, 1901. No. 61.)



HANDLE OF "KINGFISHER" KRISS.



HANDLE OF "KINGFISHER" KRISS,
OLD PATTERN.

(*Miscellanea*, 1901. No. 77.)

possibly the only one extant. This *kris* seems to have been sold by a Malay in this region, many of whom are well known to have been deported by the Siamese between the years 1790 and 1820; colonies of their descendants still exist in Siam, and have been visited by the writer. The early type of "Kingfisher" *kris* is much more like the bird's head than the modern pattern, which is, however, the only one seen among or known to the Malays. The region in question has rarely been visited by Europeans.

Malay Metal-work.

Rosenhain.

Notes on Malay Metal-work. Communicated by Walter Rosenhain, B.A., to the Anthropological Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Bradford, Sept. 10th, 1900. [To be printed in full in this *Journal*, vol. xxxi.] **78**

The paper dealt with some specimens of Malay metal-work submitted to the author for microscopic and other examination by Mr. W. W. Skeat. Some Malay processes actually witnessed by Mr. Skeat were described, and the bearings of the microscopic examination on the explanations of these processes were discussed.

The first question dealt with was the production of the "damask" pattern on a Malay kris. Microphotographs were given showing that the "damask iron" really consists of layers of loosely welded wrought iron, the only other metal used being tool steel. The body of the blade is made of steel, and a layer of laminated "damask iron" is welded upon either side of the central layer of steel; a thin layer of steel is welded on outside the "damask iron." The author believes that the striated "damask" effect is due to the opening of the loose welds in the damask iron during the forging of the blade, steel being driven between the laminæ. The outside layer of steel is entirely ground away, and when the compound surface so produced is "etched" by the pickling process employed, the more readily corroded steel is attacked, leaving the edges of the layers of iron as a series of narrow projecting ridges.

The tools of the Malay goldsmith were next described, and the micro-structure and composition of Malay bronzes and "white metal" were described and discussed.

The final section of the paper dealt with the Malay method of producing chains by casting.

Language: Theory of Grammar.

Temple.

A Theory of Universal Grammar, as applied to a Group of Savage Languages. By Colonel R. C. Temple, C.I.E. (*Jour. Roy. Asiatic Society*, July, 1899, 8vo.) Presented by the Author. **79**

This little pamphlet of forty pages is described by its author as an attempt to formulate a general theory of grammar upon logical principles, in which reference to the terms and conceptions of the ordinary inflectional languages of modern Europe should be abandoned. Describers of new languages are very rarely found to have the courage to break away from the trammels of the classical or modern systems of arrangement and nomenclature, and follow the natural structure and development of the language discussed. The difficulties are acknowledged, and many expedients invented to bring them into line with the totally different model, and native methods of thought and expression are thereby obscured.

To the student of those languages, therefore, which do not come within the view of the classical scholar, and to those who find an interest in the uncultivated and