

Chapter 11 Nias and Borneo



Nias

The island Nias is situated off the north-western coast of Sumatra. The people there were very warlike headhunters, who carried on an everlasting feud against each other. It was a *Megalithic Culture* that worshipped the ancestors and spirits. Because of that, the kris, which is associated with *Hinduism* and especially with *Sivaism*, had not especially taken root among them. Only the most prominent chiefs might eventually wear a kris (see Fig 209).

The Krisses of Nias

Most “Nias krisses”, called *Si Euli*¹, are found in the northern part of the island. The most prominent type of “Nias kris” has an long pointed blade, a big ivory hilt which is slightly bent with a big round disc on the top of it. The sheath has a crescent shaped *Gambar* and a *Gandar* covered with brass rings (see Fig 205). Another type has a hilt in brass that looks like the *Nunggak Semi* hilt from Central Java (see Fig 206, and chapter 5 Fig 32 a). It may have a single edged knife-shaped blade. The sheath is a mixture of a *Siwaih*- and a kris sheath (see chapter 9,3 Fig 175 and 176) except for a small angled foot (*Buntut*). Under the *Gambar* there are sometimes fastened chains with small brass bells, an ear pick and a pair of tweezers. A third type of Nias kris has a bronze or wooden hilt which represents a stylized *Lasara head*. It has the same type of blade as the aforementioned “Nias kris” (see Fig 207 and Fig 208). But *Aceh* krisses as well as *Buginese* krisses² are found, too (see Fig 209). The main cause of the *Acehnese* and *Buginese* influence was that they both collected many slaves in Nias. They came from the many prisoners of war which the tribes took from each other during their eternal feuds.

¹ The indigenous people call it a *Si Euli*. It is a kind of hybrid-kris often having a knife-shaped one edged blade and not a real kris blade.

² W, Gronert, J. Feldman: *Nias Tribal Treasures*, Delft 1990, p 34 fig 12.



Fig 205) A chieftain " Nias Kris", *Si Euli*.

Hilt: Big ivory hilt which is slightly bent. It has a big round disc on the top. At the bottom a brass ferrule.

Blade: Straight with no *Pamor* and *Ganja*.

Sheath: The sheath has a crescent shaped *Gambar* and a *Gandar* covered with knobby brass rings. The loop below the *Gambar* is broken off and the *Buntut* is missing.

Area: North Nias.

Date: 19th century.

The National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen. (inv.nr C. 3720)³

³ Karsten Sejr Jensen: *Den Indonesiske Kris*, Copenhagen 1998, p 191 fig 124.



Fig 206) "Nias Kris", *Si Euli*.

Hilt: *Nunggak Semi* like hilt in brass with a baluster shaped ending.

Blade: A single edged knife-shaped blade (the same type as Fig 207 and 208).

Sheath: The sheath is a mixture of the sheath of a *Siwaih* and the sheath of a kris (See chapter 9,3 Fig 175 and 176) except for a small angled foot. Under the *Gambar* chains with small brass bells, an ear pick and a pair tweezers are fastened to a brass loop. The *Gandar* is decorated with rattan bindings.

Length of the blade: 24,5 cm.

Area: North Nias.

Date: 19th century.

Private collection.⁴

⁴ Karsten Sejr Jensen: *Den Indonesiske Kris*, Copenhagen 1998, p 193 fig 125.



Fig 207) "Nias Kris", *Si Euli*.

Hilt: A stylized animal head, probably a *Lasara-head*⁵ in wood. The grip is decorated with bands i brass decorated with *Tumpals* and knobs.

Blade: A single edged knife-shaped blade (the same type as Fig 206 and 208).

Sheath: The sheath is a mixture of the sheath of a *Siwaih* and the sheath of a kris except for a small angled foot (the front part of the *Gambar* is broken off). (see Fig 206 and Fig 208). The *Gandar* is wound with bands of plaited rattan.

Area: North Nias.

Date: 19th century.

Private collection.

⁵ The mythical animal on the hilts of the Nias swords (*Balatö*) - it is presumable a kind of *Makara* head.



Fig 208) "Nias Kris", *Si Euli*.

Hilt: A stylized animal head, probably a *Lasara-head* in brass decorated with bands of stripes and *Tumpals*.

Blade: A single edged knife-shaped blade. (the same type as Fig 206 and 207)

Sheath: The sheath is a mixture of the sheath of a *Siwaih* and the sheath of a kris except for a small angled foot in pewter (see fig 206 and 207). The *Gambar* and *Gandar* is wound with brass wire. There is pewter decoration on the *Gambar* and a brass ring.

Area: North Nias.

Date: 19th century.

Private collection.



Fig 209) A Chief from North Nias with a Gayo/Aceh type of kris (see chapter 9,3 Fig 164 (the hilt) and Fig 168 (the sheath)).

BORNEO

Borneo is not a kris-area as such. The indigenous *Dayak* population were headhunters and had no krisses. At the coasts, however, where the *Malays* and *Javanese* have settled, you may find many different kris-types. First and foremost you will find *Buginese* types, but also *Sumatra* types are represented with sheaths of the *Tanggah* type as well as the crescent shaped type (*Gambar-Tangalla*). You may of course find *Javanese* types, too. The *Javanese Gayaman* type of sheath from *Banjarmasin*, however, differentiates a bit from the *Javanese* type by being a little more chubby and rounded in its shape (Fig 216 a). On the northern coast of Borneo, especially in the eastern part, you will find *Moro-krisses* (Fig 220), but also a special Borneo version of the *Moro-kris* (Fig 217, 218, 219).

Banjarmasin

Banjarmasin in *Kalimantan* in South Borneo was in the beginning of its history much influenced by the *Javanese Majapahit* kingdom. Navies and envoys from *Majapahit* put in periodically to levy tribut in forest products. *Banjarmasin*'s ruling class modeled palace and court culture on the East Java Kingdom. Envoys from *Demak* brought *Islam* to its port. Around 1530 the local culture hero, *Pangeran Samudra* converted to *Islam* and took the reign name *Sultan Suriansyah*. But Java continued to exert political pressure on *Banjarmasin*'s ruling class, when *Mataram* succeeded as the most powerful state in the region. *Banjarmasin* had to send annual missions of homage and products to the *Mataram* capital. Then following *Mataram*'s attacks on Java's north coast, *Javanese* merchants poured into *Banjarmasin*. VOC⁶ monopoly policies gave *Banjarmasin* the way out of submission to Java's king. In 1635 *Banjarmasin*'s ruler agreed to sell their pepper exclusively to the VOC. By 1641 they felt able to give up sending the expensive tribute to missions from *Mataram*. The VOC's conquest of *Makassar* (1669) produced another influx of traders. The fluid networks of Asian shipping shifted to *Banjarmasin*. Rival factions fought for control of the sultanate through coups and assassinations. Conversion to *Islam* brought a *Malay* style to the area. *Kalimantan* people who converted to *Islam* adopted *Malay* language, because they perceived it as the language of *Muslim* and *Muslim government*. Converts adopted *Malay* forms of dress, diet, house style and occupations associated with *Malay style*⁷.

Banjarmasin Krisses

The only fairly special Borneo-kris comes from the *Banjarmasin* area in Southern Borneo (*Kalimantan*). Most krisses were forged in *Negara* the center of weapon forging of the Islamic principality of *Banjarmasin*. It was made into a large scale weapon industry in the middle of the 19th century, when the independent sultan of *Banjarmasin* came into conflict with the *Dutch* colonial authorities⁸. Most of the hilts are inspired by the *Buginese Pangulu* - and the *Sumatran Jawa Demam* hilt. But it is also found in a *Nunggak Semi* version inspired by the *Javanese* type. The fashionable ones are made from fire-gilded copper/brass and adorned with mounted diamonds⁹ or quartz stones. (Fig 214 a, b, c).

⁶ VOC= Vereennigde Oost-Indische Compagnie. The Dutch East Asian company.

⁷ Jean Gelman Taylor: *Indonesia, Peoples and Histories*, New Haven and London 2003, p 195 ff.

⁸ David van Duuren: *The Kris*, Wijk en Aalenburg, the Netherlands 1998, p 82-83.

⁹ The diamonds were found in this area and exported to Java and other parts of Indonesia. They were called "Matapura stones" after their region of origin. See David van Duuren: *The Kris*, the Netherlands 1998, p 83.

Krisses with this type of hilt were “show off pieces” for courtiers and princely scions. Frequently this type of krisses have a *Mendak* which is built into the handle (Fig 214 a, b). The other types of *Mendak* or *Selut*, they may have, are of a varying range of *Javanese* or *Buginese* types. Their blades are often a little crude and resemble blades from *Sumatra*, *Java* and *South Celebes* (Fig 215 a, b, c, d). The *Sorsoran* part of their blades may be rather broad. Their sheaths may be the *Tanggah*-, *Makkassar/Gowa Ladrang* type or the chubby *Gayaman* type (Fig 216 a, b, c).

Special Types of Krisses from North-East Borneo

Hilts

In North-East Borneo you may find krisses influenced by the *Moros*. They may have typical Moro hilts, but they also have hilts that are different from the hilts of the *Moro-krisses*. This type represent a kind of a more or less stylized short beaked *Garuda* in ivory sitting in a squatting *Pralambapada* position on a *Tumpal* throne. It holds its hands on its knee. The position represents the ancestor position, which you may find in the *Majapahit krisses* (see chapter 2 Fig 9,3), the early krisses from *Banten* (chapter 3 Fig 17 a), and krisses from *Southern Sumatra* (see chapter 9,2 Fig 158). Its short beak is rather rounded. On its breast it wears a big jewellery shaped like a flying bird with its wings spread out. On its back it has a kind of shield - it seems to be another interpretation of the tail of the *Garuda* bird or the *Garuda Mungkur* you find on the *Jawa Demam/Garuda* hilts (chapter 9,3 Fig 178, 179 and chapter 6 Fig 50. 57). The kind of silver ornaments and the length of the hilt of fig 210 b shows the *Moro* influence on the hilt-type. So this hilt-type represents a mixture of elements from *Old Java*, *Sumatra* and the *Moros*. It indicates the cultures from different parts of Indonesia, which have influenced this area.



Fig 210 a and b) Two sea-ivory hilts from North-East Borneo, which represent the short beaked *Garuda*.

Mendaks

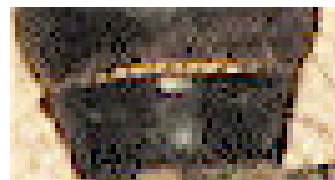
The *Mendaks* may be a simple cup (Fig 211 c), or a big cup on a long stem with a big bulb below the cup (Fig 211 b). They may be in black painted iron (Fig 211 a and c) or in silver (Fig 211 b).



a)



b)



c)

Fig 211 a, b, c) *Mendaks* from North-East Borneo

Blades

The blades show a strong Moro influence.



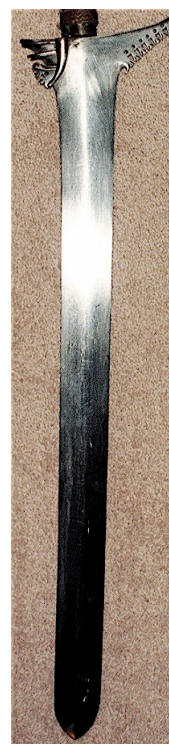
a)



b)



c)



d)

Fig 212 a, b, c, d) Blades from North-East Borneo. They are either made by *Moro*-smiths or influenced by the *Moros*. Only b has *Pamor*. Notice the silver clamp that fasten the hilt to the blade - a typical *Moro* feature.

Sheaths

The sheaths of North-East Borneo are *Moro*-types, too, but may be decorated with *Dayak* motifs (Fig 213 a, b c).



a)



b)



c)



d)

Fig 213 a, b, c, d) The sheaths from North-East Borneo are typical *Moro* types.

- a) has a special *Ladrang* shaped *Gambar* with a rather curly outline (the *Dayaks* have a preference for curly entwined motifs)
- b) (the backside of Fig a) is decorated with a *Dayak* dragon (*Aso*) or crocodile motif.
- c) has a *Ladrang* shaped *Gambar* painted with *Dayak* motifs.
- d) a *Tanggah* type.

Special Types of Krisses from South Borneo - Banjarmasin

Hilts from Banjarmasin



a)



b)



c)

Fig 214 a, b. c) Hilts from the *Banjarmasin* sultanat. They are in fire-gilded bronze decorated with mounted diamonds.

- a) represents a *Banjarmasin Garuda* hilt inspired by the *Jawa Demam* hilt, which indicates influence from Sumatra.
- b) represents a *Banjarmasin Nunggak Semi* hilt, which indicates *Central Javanese* influence.
- c) represents a *Banjarmasin Pangulu* hilt, which indicates *Buginese* influence.

Mendaks

The *Mendaks* are mostly built into the hilt (See Fig 214 a and b). It consists of a cup decorated with mounted diamonds and a short stem. But a variation of other types are found, too (Fig 214 c is a Sumatran type).

Blades

The blades are rather crude and show influences from Sumatra and Java.



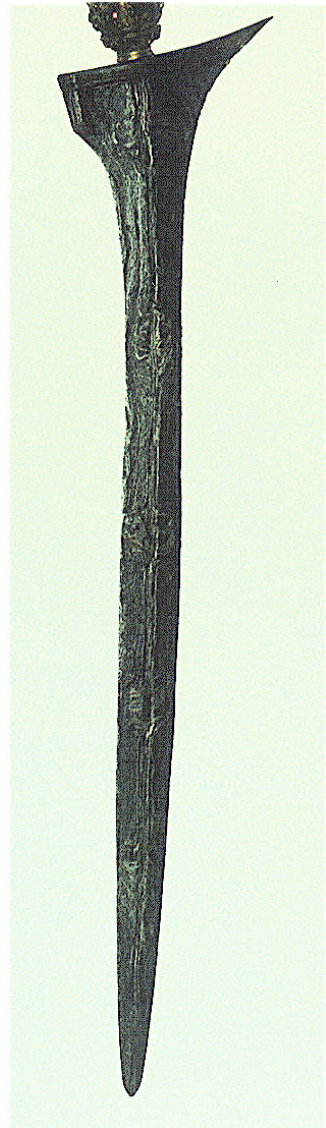
a)



b)



c)



d)

Fig 215 a, b, c, d) The blades are rather crude and primitive compared with blades from other kris centers. They show *Javanese* and *Sumatran* influence.

a and b) show *Javanese* influence.

c and d) show *Sumatran* influence.

Sheaths

The Sheaths show Javanese, Macassar-Gowa and Buginese influences.



a)

b)

c)

Fig 216 a, b, c) Three types of sheaths from *Banjarmasin*.

a) The chubby *Kalimantan Gayman* type indicates *Javanese* influence.

b) A *Makassar-Gowa Ladrang* type indicates *Celebes* influence.

c) A *Buginese Tanggah* type indicates *Buginese* influence from either *Sumatra* or *South Celebes*.

These different types illustrate influences from *Java*, *Celebes* and *Sumatra*. The *Javanese* influence was strong until *Mataram* lost control over the area in the 17th century. After the fall of *Makassar* in 1669 the fluid networks of Asian shipping shifted to *Banjarmasin* and many people from *Makassar* moved to *Banjarmasin*. The *Buginese* overtook much of the trade from that time on and settled in *Banjarmasin*, too.

The Krisses from North-East Borneo



Fig 217)

Hilt: Short beaked Garuda figure in sea-ivory, sitting in the squatting *Pralambapada* position on a throne with alternating, reversed *Tumpal* figures (See Fig 210 a).

Mentak: A big cup on a conic stem with a big bulb below the cup in black painted iron. *Blade:* Dapor Chenkrong? 11 Lok. Notice the silver clamp which fasten the blade to the hilt - a *Moro* feature (see chapter 12 p 2).

Pamor: None? The blade is too worn to distinguish the *Pamor*.

Length of the blade: 34,5 cm.

Sheath: A *Tanggah* type. The *Gandar* is embellished with silver rings and plates. There is a plaited rotang ring at top of the *Gandar*. The *Buntut* is in black horn (See Fig 213 d).

Area: North-East Borneo.

Date: The early part of the 19th century or older. Private collection.



Fig 218)

Hilt: The same type of hilt as Fig 217, but decorated with silver bands and bound up with a string.

Mendak/Selut: A big cup with a big bulb and a short ring below. All in silver.

Blade: Dapor Megantara, 7 Lok. Notice the silver clamp that fasten the hilt to the blade - a *Moro* characteristic.

Pamor: Adeg Lembut. The Pamor is placed in a band in the middle of the blade in a characteristic *Moro* way. Length of the blade: 51,6 cm.

Sheath: A special *Ladrang* shaped *Gambar* with a rather curly outline (the *Dayaks* have a preference for curly and entwined motifs). On the backside there is a *Dayak* dragon (*Aso*) or crocodile motif (see Fig 213 b) Area: North-East Borneo. According to G.C. Stone the type may originally comes from the *Illana Moros*, *Tuscany Bay Mindanao*¹⁰.

Date: 19th century.

Private collection.

¹⁰ George Cameron Stone: *A Glossary of the Construction, Decorations and Use of Arms and Armor*, New York 1961, p 390 Figure 485 nr. 6, which depicts a similar type. For another similar kris- see Robert Cato: *Moro Swords*, Singapore 1996, p 61 fig 37.



Fig 219)

Hilt: The same type as fig 217 and 218.

Mendak: A black metal cup.

Blade: Dapor Sabok Inten, 11 Lok. The clamp that fastens the blade to the hilt is missing.

Pamor: None.

Area: North-East Borneo.

Date: 19th century.

Private collection.



Fig 220) Fighting kris.

Hilt: Horse's hoof hilt - the pommel in wood looks like a horse's hoof. The hilt is bound up with plaited cord.

Mendak: Silver ring.

Blade: Dapor Sinom - *Sundang Espada* type. A silver clamp (*Baca Baca*) fastens the hilt to the blade.

Pamor: None.

Sheath: Moro *Ladrang* type. The upper part of the *Gandar* is bound up with black cord. Both the *Gambar* and the *Gandar* are decorated with *Dayak* motifs. The big flat *Buntut* is a Moro characteristic from the Sulu Islands (chapter 12 Fig 236).

Area: North-East Borneo/Sulu Islands.

Date: 19. century.

Private collection.

The Krisses from South Borneo - Banjarmasin



Fig 121)

Hilt: Banjarmasin Jawa Demam/Garuda hilt in fire-gilded bronze decorated with bands of mounted diamonds (Matapura stones) and rubies. Jawa Demam style.

Mendak: Built into the hilt. Mounted with diamonds.

Blade: Dapor Sempana, 7 lok.

Pamor: Sumsum Buron/ Uler Lulut ? with Sombru in the Sorsoran part of the blade. Sumatran Buginese style (see chapter 9,3 Fig 178).

Length of the blade: 40,5 cm.

Sheath: Tanggah type. Pendok Bunton in silver decorated framed floral motif. Oval *Buntut* in silver. Buginese style.

Area: Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, South Borneo.

Date. 19th century

Private collection.



Fig 222)

Hilt: Banjarmasin Jawa Demam/Garuda hilt in fire-gilded bronze decorated with bands of mounted diamonds (Matapura stones). Jawa Demam style.

Mendak: Built into the hilt. Mounted with diamonds.

Blade: Sempina, 7 Lok.

Pamor: Adeg ? (The blade is too worn to properly distinguish the *Pamor*).

Length of the blade: 32,3 cm.

Sheath: Kalimantan Gayaman - notice its chubby shape. *Pendok Bunton* in fire-gilded copper decorated with floral design. Javanese style.

Area: Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, South Borneo.

Date: 19th century.

Private collection¹¹.

¹¹ Karsten Sejr Jensen: *Den Indonesiske Kris*, Copenhagen 1998, p 197 fig 127.



Fig 223)

Hilt: The same as fig 222.

Mendak: *Angkup Randu* type in gilded metal decorated with patterns of granulated balls.

Blade: Dapor Sangkelat, 13 Lok.

Pamor: Adeg Kurung ?

Sheath: Makassar-Gowa *Ladrang* type with a *Pendok Buntun* in silver decorated with framed floral design on the upper half and framed fishing net design on the lower half. *Buntut* with floral design mounted with diamonds.

Area: Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, South Borneo.

Date: 19th century.

Private collection.



Fig 224)

Hilt: Banjarmasin Pangulu type in fire-gilded bronze mounted with diamonds, related to fig 222 and 223.

Mendak: Sumatra type with a lobed rim decorated with Tumpals in filigree mounted with diamonds.

Blade: Dapor Nagasasra (the Naga is represented in a rather primitive style). Ganja Wilut (undulated).

Pamor: Ganggeng Kanyut ?

Length of the blade: 35,5 cm.

Area: Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, South Borneo.

Date: 19th century.

Private collection.



Fig 225)

Hilt: Banjarmasin Nunggak Semi type in fire-gilded bronze mounted with diamonds.

Mendak: Built into the hilt mounted with diamonds.

Blade: Dapor Pasopati.

Pamor: Beras Wutah.

Length of the blade: 36 cm.

Sheath: Sandang Walikat type.

Area: Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, South Borneo.

Date: 19th century.

Private collection.



Fig 226) Magic kris

Hilt: A long nosed figure (*Ganesha*?) in bone sitting in a squatting position with inwards turned feet (meditative position. See chapter 2 Fig 9,4). He is holding a long stemmed flower in his hands. It looks as if he smells it (maybe he is a kind of vegetative genius?).

Mendak: Cup in copper/*Suasa* with a ring in the middle of the stem. The underside of the cup is decorated with a star design.

Blade: Dapor Brojol. Shaped like a *Keris Buda*, decorated with spots and magical figures (spirits) - presumably the kris of a *Dukun* (shaman).

Pamor: The figures and spots are produced by etching.

Total length of the kris 29 cm.

Sheath: Kalimantan Gayaman type with a *Buntut* in black horn (Sumatra style see chapter 9,1 Fig 145 g).

Area: Kalimantan, South Borneo.

Date: 19th century

From the collection of G. Tillman.

Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam (inv. nr. 1772-981)¹².

¹² Karsten Sejr Jensen: *Den Indonesiske Kris*, Copenhagen 1998, p 195 fig 126. *Budaya-Indonesia*, The Tropenmuseum Amsterdam 1987, p 211 and 280 fig 302.