



K O N I N K L I J K E N E D E R L A N D S E
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Provenance report regarding Staatsiekris - keris (Ceremonial Kris)

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Provenance Report regarding Staatsiekris – keris (Ceremonial Kris)

Tom Quist

 Photo: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Inv.no. RV-3600-193	Custodian	NMVW Museum Volkenkunde
	Current possessor	Dutch State
	Inventory number	RV-3600-193
	Material/technique	Iron, nickel, wood, precious stones, gold, ivory
	Measurements	Length: 67.5 cm Length of blade: 54 cm Length of hilt: 13.5 cm Length of sheath: 54 cm

Summary of findings

The provenance investigation concerning the kris, inventory number RV-3600-193 in the collection of Museum Volkenkunde, which is part of the National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW), has confirmed that the weapon was looted by the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army in April 1908 during the *puputan* (“fight to the end” ritual) in Klungkung (Bali). The provenance investigation was unable to establish whether this happened on the battlefield or afterwards in the Royal Palace of Klungkung. It was similarly not established whether the kris was the property of Dewa Agung Jambé II, the ruler of Klungkung, or someone close to him. Some of the spoils of war taken by the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army from Klungkung in November 1908 were shipped to the Netherlands. The objects were divided up between a number of museums, with the kris being transferred in March 1909 to the Ethnographic Museum of the Royal Military Academy (KMA) in Breda, whose collection was taken over in 1956 by Museum Volkenkunde.

Reconstruction provenance

≤ 1908

(Relative of) Dewa Agung Jambe II, Klungkung

NL-HaNA, 2.10.52.01, inv. no. 453, mail report no. 727, copy of telegram Resident Bali and Lombok, 04-05-1908; inv. no. 610, copy of missive Resident Bali and Lombok, 29-06-1908, p. 3.

1908

Government of the Dutch East Indies, Batavia (presently Jakarta)

NL-HaNA, 2.10.36.04, inv. no. 610 "Extract uit het Register der Besluiten van den Gouverneur-Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indië," 14-11-1908, no. 7.

1909-1956

Ethnographic Museum of the Royal Military Academy, Breda

NL-LdnRMV, A16, file no. 6: "Koninklijke Militaire Academie, Ethnographische Verzameling, Register, I," 1909, p. 9; file no. 26, "Aanwinstenboek van de Ethnografische Verzameling van de Koninklijke Militaire Academie," 1949, p. 2.

1956-present

NMVW Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden

Marie-Antoinette Willemsen, *Volkenkunde in Breda. Van Indische verzameling tot Rijksmuseum Justinus van Nassau en de Vereniging voor Volkenkunde* (Breda 2011) 56-58.

Introduction and context

In December 2021, NMVW conducted provenance research into the kris with inventory number RV-3600-193 in the collection of Museum Volkenkunde, followed by reporting in January 2022. The kris was selected as part of Work Package D of the Pilot Project Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era (PPOCE) because the weapon was looted by the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL) during an expedition on Bali in 1908. The kris is currently part of the permanent Indonesia display in Museum Volkenkunde.

The 1908 military campaign was the result of Balinese resistance led by Dewa Agung Jambe II, the ruler of Klungkung, to the monopolisation of the opium trade by the Dutch colonial administration. A *puputan* took place after KNIL troops arrived at the Palace of Klungkung on 28 April 1908. During this "fight to the end" ritual, the ruler died along with over a hundred family members and others close to him when, bearing krisses and lances, they advanced towards Dutch gunfire. Approximately fifty Balinese were also wounded.¹ Afterwards, a few survivors were banished to Lombok.² The *puputan* in Klungkung marked the end of a long series of KNIL expeditions on Bali that had started in 1846. As far as the Dutch side was concerned, the 'pacification' of the island was deemed to be complete. There was now direct or indirect colonial administration everywhere.³

The wavy blade of the kris has *pamor* - patterns in shades of grey obtained by forging together different steel layers containing iron and nickel.⁴ There are six precious stones on the gold ring

¹ National Archives of the Netherlands (NL-HaNA), accession no. 2.10.52.01: Ministry of Colonies: Politieke Verslagen en Berichten uit de Buitengewesten, 1898-1940, inventory number 453: Bali and Lombok, 28-06-1909 no. 1, 1908-1909, mail report no. 834, "Dagboek van den Chef van den Staf van de Excursie in Zuid-Bali," p. 9.

² National Library of the Netherlands (KB), Delpher, *De locomotief*, 07-05-1908, p. 2, article "De excursie naar Bali," <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001664016:mpeg21:a00006>, consulted on 13-01-2022.

³ Piet Hagen, *Koloniale oorlogen in Indonesië. Vijf eeuwen verzet tegen vreemde overheersing* (Amsterdam 2018) 377; Francine Brinkgreve, "Vorsten van Bali en koloniaal gezag. Collectievorming en politiek," in Endang Sri Hardiati and Pieter ter Keurs (eds.), *Indonesië. De ontdekking van het verleden* (Amsterdam 2005) 122-146, esp. 137.

⁴ Edward Frey, *The Kris: Mystic Weapon of the Malay World* (Oxford 1988) 31.

joining the blade to the hilt. The curved gold hilt is inlaid with 24 gemstones. The kris's inventory cards in the NMVW collection management system indicate that the figure on the hilt is a malignant demon (rakshasa), but according to European literature the deity Bayu is usually depicted on figurative Balinese kris hilts.⁵ Besides the hilt, the sheath is also indicative of a Balinese provenance.⁶ The ivory sheath opening transitions into a *kayu pelet* (speckled wood) sheath, which is part gilt and part silver plated on one side. A motif of flowers and tendrils can be seen at the top of the gilded section. Further research in cooperation with Indonesian kris experts could therefore focus, among other things, on identifying the figure on the hilt.



Photos: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. RV-3600-193.

Provenance report

The kris has been part of the collection of Museum Volkenkunde since 1956. That was when the collection of the Ethnographic Museum of the Royal Military Academy (KMA) in Breda was transferred to Leiden, where it was registered in the collection as series 3600. The museum in Breda continued to exist until 1993 as a subsidiary institution of Leiden as Volkenkundig Museum Justinus van Nassau.⁷

Initially the kris was given the inventory number 211 in the collection in Breda, but later this was changed to 193.⁸ The number was probably changed around 1940, when the curator and KMA

⁵ David van Duuren, *De kris. Een aardse benadering van een kosmisch symbool* (Amsterdam 1996) 84; Frey, *The Kris*, 45.

⁶ Frey, *The Kris*, 43, 45, 48 (fig. 10a), 52, fig. 9a, fig. 12a, fig. 14a, fig. 14c.

⁷ Marie-Antoinette Willemsen, *Volkenkunde in Breda. Van Indische verzameling tot Rijksmuseum Justinus van Nassau en de Vereniging voor Volkenkunde* (Breda 2011) 56-58; Wikipedia. "Volkenkundig Museum Justinus van Nassau." https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volkenkundig_Museum_Justinus_van_Nassau, consulted on 10-01-2022.

⁸ National Museum of Ethnology (NL-LdnRMV), accession no. A16: "Justinus van Nassau" Museum of Ethnology Archives, National Museum of Ethnology, Breda Section, file number 6: "Koninklijke Militaire Academie, Ethnographische Verzameling, Register, I", 1909, p. 9.

lecturer, Jan Marginus Somer (1899-1979), compiled a new inventory of the collection.⁹ The old number was part of the numbering used by Claas Spat (1865-1931) when registering objects in collection. They are also known as the spat numbers.¹⁰ Spat was a lecturer at the KMA and keeper of the collection until into the nineteen-twenties. He started collecting ethnographic objects from the Indonesian Archipelago in 1905 to serve as examples of actual items used in the field as part of the training of non-commissioned officers taking the East Indies curriculum at the KMA.¹¹

In March 1909, a number of objects that had been looted during the Klungkung expedition were donated by the Ministry of Colonies to the KMA's Ethnographic Museum. The kris was among these fifteen objects and was given the collection number 211.¹² Johannes Diederich Eduard Schmeltz (1839-1909), Director of Museum Volkenkunde, sent the objects to Breda.¹³ In January 1909, the Ministers of the Interior and Colonies assigned Schmeltz the task of distributing the looted objects from Klungkung that were shipped to the Netherlands. He was assisted in this by Anton Willem Nieuwenhuis (1864-1953) and Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936), professors at Leiden University.¹⁴ In addition to the KMA's Ethnographic Museum, other recipients of objects included the Koloniaal Museum in Haarlem (the present Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam), the Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde in Rotterdam (the present Wereldmuseum), and the ethnographic collection of the Hoofdcursus Kampen (which merged with the KMA's collection in 1923¹⁵).¹⁶ The remaining objects were incorporated into the collection of Museum Volkenkunde.¹⁷ All the spoils of war from Klungkung that were brought to the Netherlands in 1908 have been part of the collections of NMVW and the Wereldmuseum since the merger of Museum Volkenkunde and the Tropenmuseum in 2014.

At the end of November 1908, the spoils of war from Klungkung were transported on board the steamship *Wilis* to Rotterdam, where they arrived at the end of December.¹⁸ The shipment from Batavia went ahead after the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies decided in mid-November to allocate a part of the spoils of war from Klungkung to "eligible museums in the Netherlands," to donate a second part to the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (the present Museum Nasional Indonesia), and to sell off a third part publicly for the benefit of the Government of the Dutch East Indies.¹⁹ The decision corresponds to the division proposed by the board of the Bataviaasch Genootschap, which was asked for advice in September 1908 about the allocation of the

⁹ Willemsen, *Volkenkunde in Breda*, 32, 43; Wikipedia. "Jan Marginus Somer." https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Marginus_Somer, consulted on 11-01-2022.

¹⁰ NL-LdnRMV, A16, file no. 26: "Aanwinstenboek van de Ethnografische Verzameling van de Koninklijke Militaire Academie waarin opgenomen de verzameling van de H.C. te Kampen," 1949, p. 2; Wikidata. "Claas Spat." <https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q63004149>, consulted on 11-01-2022.

¹¹ Willemsen, *Volkenkunde in Breda*, 22, 29.

¹² NL-LdnRMV, A16, file no. 25: 'Correspondentie - nummers (rood) behorende bij het Aanwinstenboek', letter from the Director of the Rijks Ethnographic Museum, 18-03-1909 (with enclosure); file no. 26, 'Aanwinstenboek', p. 2.

¹³ In 1909, the museum was still known as Rijks Ethnographisch Museum. For reasons of clarity and consistency, this provenance report only uses the name Museum.

<http://www.biografischportaal.nl/persoon/49596645>, consulted on 12-01-2022.

¹⁴ NL-LdnRMV, accession no. A01: Correspondence archive 1867-1962, inv. no. 70: Correspondence, 1909 official, copy of letter Minister of the Interior, 19-01-1909 (with enclosures); inv. no. 232: Official Register Oct. 1908 - Jun. 1912, p. 39-41, 76; <http://www.biografischportaal.nl/persoon/10075365>; https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anton_Willem_Nieuwenhuis, consulted on 12-01-2022.

¹⁵ Willemsen, *Volkenkunde in Breda*, 29.

¹⁶ NL-LdnRMV, A01, inv. no. 221: Register Nov. 1908 - Sept. 1909, pp. 242-245.

¹⁷ NL-LdnRMV, A01, inv. no. 70, letter from curators of Leiden University, 21-01-1909 (with enclosure).

¹⁸ NL-HaNA, accession no. 2.10.36.04: Ministry of Colonies, Public Report 1901-1953, inv. no. 610: 1909 Jan. 13 - 18, draft letters principal secretary Minister of Colonies, 04-01-1909; KB, Delpher, *De locomotief*, 28-11-1908, p. 6, 'Scheepsberichten' section, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001647073:mpeg21:a00086>, consulted on 12-01-2022; *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 24-12-1908, p. 14, 'Scheepstijdingen' section, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010335811:mpeg21:a0166>, consulted on 12-01-2022.

¹⁹ NL-HaNA, 2.10.36.04, inv. no. 610, "Extract uit het Register der Besluiten van den Gouverneur-Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indië," 14-11-1908, no. 7.

objects.²⁰ That June, George François de Bruyn Kops (1859-1945), Resident of Bali and Lombok, had already recommended “converting the spoils of war into cash for the benefit of the public finances in so far as they have no special ethnographic, archaeological or artistic value.”²¹

From newspaper reports and correspondence between De Bruyn Kops and the Government of the Dutch East Indies, it emerged that the spoils of war from Klungkung were shipped from Bali to Batavia in May 1908 on the government steamship *Cycloop*.²² On 4 May, six days after the *puputan*, De Bruyn Kops notified the Governor-General in a telegram that the looted objects had been inventoried.²³ This inventory revealed that a number of kris sheaths were missing or had been switched.²⁴ The Resident also reported that most of the krisses had been looted on the battlefield.²⁵ The Ministry of Colonies archives consulted during the investigation provided no further details regarding the kris that found its way into the hands of the KNIL during the *puputan* in Klungkung. Newspapers in the Dutch East Indies did report the expedition and wrote about some looted krisses with gold figurative hilts set with precious stones, but these descriptions are not sufficiently detailed to enable identification of the kris with inventory number RV-3600-193.²⁶

Summarising, the provenance investigation has confirmed that the kris was looted by the KNIL during the *puputan* in Klungkung in April 1908, but it was unable to establish whether this happened on the battlefield or afterwards in the Royal Palace of Klungkung. It is similarly not clear whether the kris was the property of Dewa Agung Jambe II or someone close to him.

²⁰ *Notulen van de Algemeene en Directievergaderingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*. Vol. XLVI, 1908 (Batavia 1908) 102; NL-HaNA, 2.10.36.04, inv. no. 610, missive Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 05-10-1908; missive Director of Education, Worship and Industry, 12-11-1908.

²¹ NL-HaNA, 2.10.36.04, inv. no. 610, missive from the first government secretary, 22-08-1908; <http://www.biografischportaal.nl/persoon/63795289>, consulted on 13-01-2022.

²² KB, Delpher, *De locomotief*, 21-05-1908, p. 2, article “De toestand in Zuid-Bali,” <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001664054:mpeg21:a00010>, consulted on 13-01-2022; *De locomotief*, 25-05-1908, p. 6, ‘Scheepsberichten’ section, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001664064:mpeg21:a00088>, consulted on 13-01-2022; *Beschrijving van eenige tijdens de Zuid-Bali Expedities (1906-1908) buitgemaakte vorstelijke poesaka-wapens* (unpublished typescript undated) 36. There is an analogue copy of the typescript in the office of the NMVW South and Southeast Asia curators in Leiden.

²³ NL-HaNA, 2.10.52.01, inv. no. 453, mail report no. 727, copy of telegram from the Resident of Bali and Lombok, 04-05-1908.

²⁴ *Beschrijving poesaka-wapens*, 37.

²⁵ NL-HaNA, 2.10.36.04, inv. no. 610, copy missive from the Resident of Bali and Lombok, 29-06-1908, p. 3.

²⁶ See for example, KB, Delpher, *Soerabaijasch handelsblad*, 07-05-1908, p. 5, ‘Nederlandsch-Indië’ section, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011088925:mpeg21:a0032>, consulted on 13-01-2022; *Bataviaasch nieuwsblad*, 16-05-1908, p. 5, article ‘Uit Bali’, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011033811:mpeg21:a0088>, consulted on 13-01-2022.