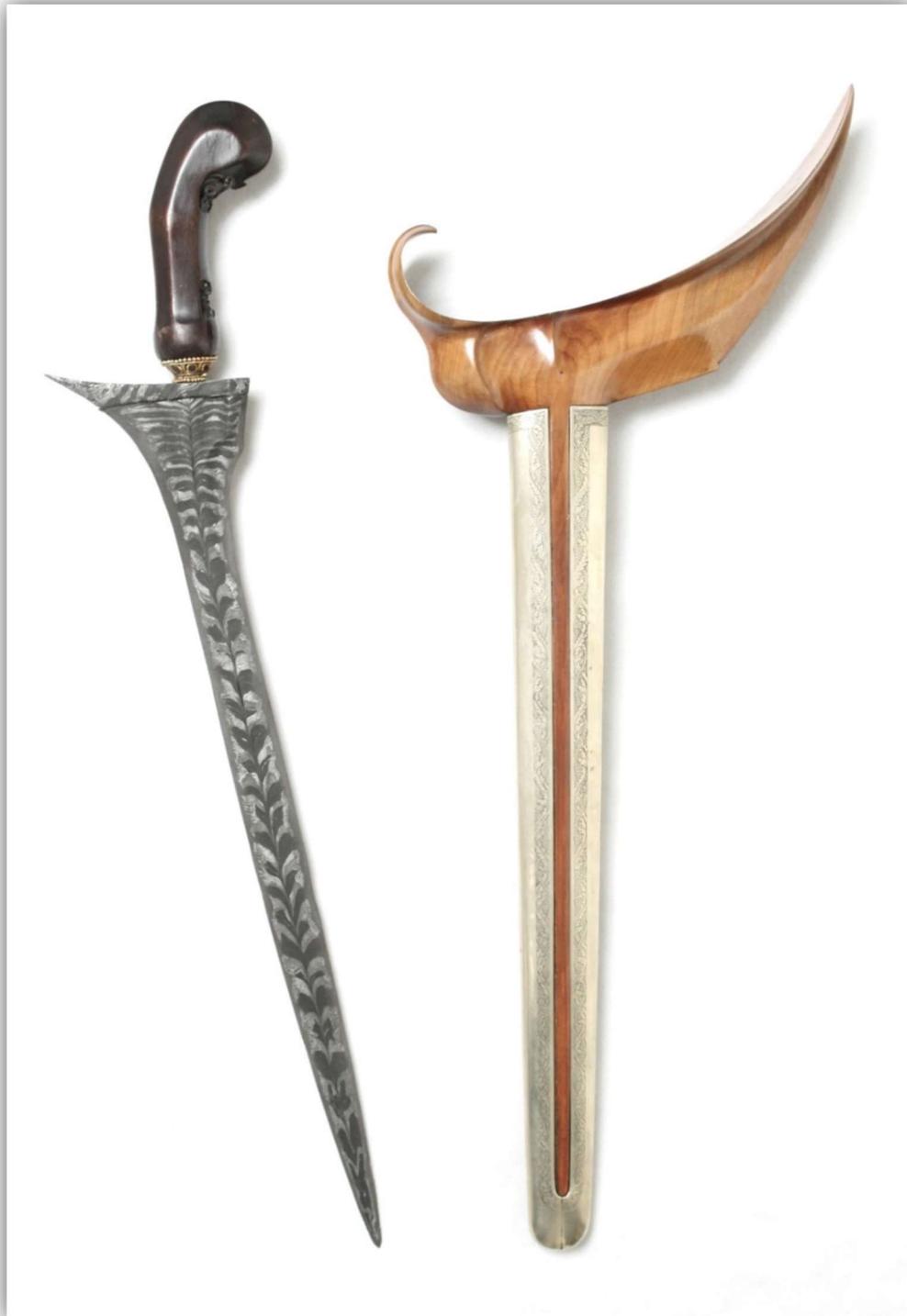


# *The Kris*

*Legendary weapon from Indonesia*



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## 1.3: KRISSES FROM WEST JAVA AND THE NORTH COAST

These krisses can be classified into 3 distinct categories according to the history of the region:

- The krisses from the old Hindu Pajajaran or Sunda Kingdom (with present day Bogor as its former capital city), which lasted from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- The krisses from the Banten Sultanate (16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century).
- The krisses from the North West coast of Java (*pesisir*).

The krisses dating from the Pajajaran period have largely disappeared with time although there is an identified *tangguh* Pajajaran as described in chapter 1.1.

The Hindu kingdom of Cirebon (formally Cerbon or Carbon) was founded in 1452 on the North West coast of Java (called *pesisir*) by Prince Cakrabuwana, one of the sons of the Pajajaran king. Cirebon was converted to an Islamic Sultanate by Sunan Gunung Jati at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and in the mid-1500's it partly defeated the Hindu kingdom of Pajajaran. The port of Banten was established as a vassal state of Cirebon, and it completed the conquest of Pajajaran in 1579. Banten was a major trade centre for spices at that time, and the krisses from Banten were the first ones to be imported in Europe from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However the port of Banten strongly declined because of the founding of Batavia (Jakarta) by the Dutch, and the Sultanate was abolished and integrated into the Dutch East Indies in 1813. The krisses from Banten then virtually disappeared unlike those from Cirebon which continued to be manufactured until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Krisses from the North Coast (*pesisir*):** The *pesisiran* krisses include those from Cirebon and from Tegal, another coastal city located about 100 km east of Cirebon, and this area is part of the West Java Province. The two types of krisses share many common features but with some differences which will be shown hereafter.

According to the local experts<sup>26</sup>, there are 3 distinct historical periods for the Cirebon kris blades:

. The blades made during the Cirebon Sepuh era (1452-1649) are rather similar to those from the Pajajaran kingdom. The straight blades are wide and thin, the wavy blades have shallow *luk* (waves), the *ricikan* (carved details) are roughly made, and the *pamor* pattern appears *ngapas* (looking like cotton).

. The blades made during the Cirebon Madya era (1697-1750) differ from the older ones from the more wavy blades, presence of a *kembang kacang* on the *gandik*, a *sogokan*, often a *ganja wulung* (without *pamor*), and large blade size called *keris corok*.

. The Cirebon Pungkasa era or Masa Cirebon Akhir (1750-1845, start of the colonial period).

The wooden sheaths (*warangka*) are generally simply made, but some of them are covered by a metal over sheath (*pendok*) with a specific style of decoration. The top part (crosspiece) can take two distinct styles, namely: either a flared and slender shape looking like a boat hull and called *perahu* (boat) with several variations, or a compact kidney shape similar to the *gayaman* krisses from Solo in Centre Java and locally called *pelokan*,

The hilts (locally called *garan*) are very peculiar as although the region had been converted to Islam since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they have kept a figurative style depicting Hindu gods or demons but partly hidden under foliage and stylized. The hilts from Cirebon usually depict either the elephant god Ganesha, or a squatting ancestor/ demon figure called *buta bajang*, or a stylized human figure with a bird head called *bebekan* (duck). The hilts from Tegal depict either Ganesha or *wayang* (shadow puppet) figures.



**Picture 1.3.1 - Kris from Cirebon (blade length: 47.5 cm)**

This large and very old kris from Cirebon is a typical specimen. The straight blade is very strong, and it has a simple *dapur Tilam Upih*; the full *pamor* pattern has a low contrast (*ngapas*) and is applied on the whole surface. The *warangka iras* (made from a single piece of wood) is worn-out and has a small crosspiece in *pelokan* style. The old and large wooden hilt probably from Tegal depicts a *wayang* figure with bulging eyes.



**Picture 1.4.6: Kris gayaman from Yogyakarta** - Blade length: 35.5 cm

This kris has an old and strong straight blade estimated in Tuban-Mataram style, and the *dapur* type is *Tilam Upih*. The *pamor* pattern is *Kenanga Ginubah* “string of ylang-ylang flowers”, which is deemed to help the owner becoming attractive and prominent in the society. The old *warangka* is made from *timoho pelet ngingrim* wood, and the silver *pendok* in *Semen Jlungut* style is embossed with floral motifs and wild animals. The *Nunggak Semi* hilt is fitted with an embossed silver *selut*.



**Picture 1.4.83: Kris *ladrang* from Solo** - Blade length: 36 cm

This kris has an old straight blade, the *dapur* type is *Sinom Robyong* and the *pamor* pattern is *Tirto Tejo*. The gold *kinatah* applied on the *sor-soran* and the *ganja* was partly refurbished, and it shows a foliage motif with some inscriptions in Javanese. The *warangka iras* is made from *trembalo* and the brass *pendok blewah* is chiselled with floral motifs. The hilt is made from black buffalo horn.



**Picture 2.7: Kris *deng-udengan/ gabilan* from Madura** - Blade length: 29.5 cm  
This very old kris *pusaka* from Sumenep has a short blade with 9 waves; the *dapur* type is *Sempana* but with peculiar Madurese features such as the thin *kembang kacang* with *jenggot* and the full *greneng*, and the *pamor* pattern is similar to the Javanese style *Ngulit Semangka*. The *warangka* crosspiece is made from ivory and decorated with a shell and foliage, and the smooth *pendok* is from *mamas* alloy. The matching ivory hilt is in *topi* style and decorated with floral motifs.



**Picture 3.22: Kris *kojongan* from Lombok** - Blade length: 52 cm

This kris from Lombok is probably semi-old (mid-20<sup>th</sup> century) and it has a very long and strong blade with 9 waves. The *dapur* type is *Nagasasra* and it includes a crowned *naga* head carved on the *gandik*, and the body is stretching in the middle of the blade. The blade surface is very smooth, and the *pamor* pattern is *Beras Wutah*. The *wrangka kojongan* is decorated with a *kala* head on the crosspiece, and the *gandar* is plated with pieces of *berora pelet*. The wooden hilt in *loncengan* style is partly painted and decorated with blue stones at the base.



**Picture 4.3: Bugis kris from Sulawesi** - Blade length: 36 cm

This large kris has an old and strong blade with 5 waves and a typical Bugis *dapur* and shape; the complex *pamor* pattern using the *La Kurisi* (twisted) technique is locally called *Tebba Bunga* “carved flower” and is similar to the Javanese style *Lar Gangsir*. The sheath crosspiece (*jonga-jonga* or *sampir*) is made from *kemuning* wood and the *wanua* is covered by an old embossed silver *pendok* which was damaged and replaced in the bottom part. The large hilt in *rekko* style is made from hippo ivory and is fitted on a silver cup decorated with applied granulation.



**Picture 5.29: Kris from Palembang** - Blade length: 36 cm

This kris has an old and worn-out blade with 9 shallow waves, and the *pamor* pattern is similar to the Javanese style *Beras Wutah*. The *sampir* is made from *kemuning*, and the *batang* from a striped wood but it may be have been dyed. The small ivory hilt in specific *Jawa demam* style from Palembang has an extremely fine chiselled decoration.

## 2. PAMOR MIRING PATTERN STYLES

As indicated in the introduction, these *pamor* patterns are either perpendicular or diagonal to the blade and they are also classified as *pamor rekan*, i.e. with a pattern planned in advance by the kris maker. There are more stylistic variations than for *pamor mlumah*, and they are generally more difficult to make and highly appreciated by the kris specialists and collectors.

**The longitudinal pattern styles** are quite common and the basic style is called *Adeg* “upright” and consisting in parallel lines all along the blade. This pattern is sometimes called *pamor Singkir* after the name of a famous *empu* from the Blambangan period who is supposed to have introduced or popularized it. *Pamor Adeg* is deemed to protect the kris owner against misfortunes, disasters, and black magic spells.

There are several variations for this pattern, especially *Adeg Sapu*, *Adeg Mrambut*, *Adeg Siji*, *Sada Saler*, etc., as well as some related patterns such as *Pancuran Mas* and *Dadung Muntir*.

According to the traditional Javanese spiritual teaching (*Kejawen*) and phenomenology, this style of *pamor* pattern symbolizes a broom made of palm rib leaves standing upright and sweeping away the disasters & witchcraft, and representing the power of the wind (*Bayu*)<sup>7</sup>. Another style of longitudinal *pamor miring* pattern is called *Ujung Gunung* “top of the mountain” where the *pamor* lines form parallel and stacked triangular corners from the base to the tip of the blade; there are two similar *pamor* patterns, namely: *pamor Raja Abala Raja* “King of the kings”, and *pamor Pendita Bala Pendita* “Head of the priests”.

**The diagonal “leaf” pattern styles** exist in many variations and basically consist in symmetrical *pamor* motifs looking like fronds or blossoms on each side of the blade. They are among the most complex and appreciated *pamor* patterns, and the main ones are as follows:

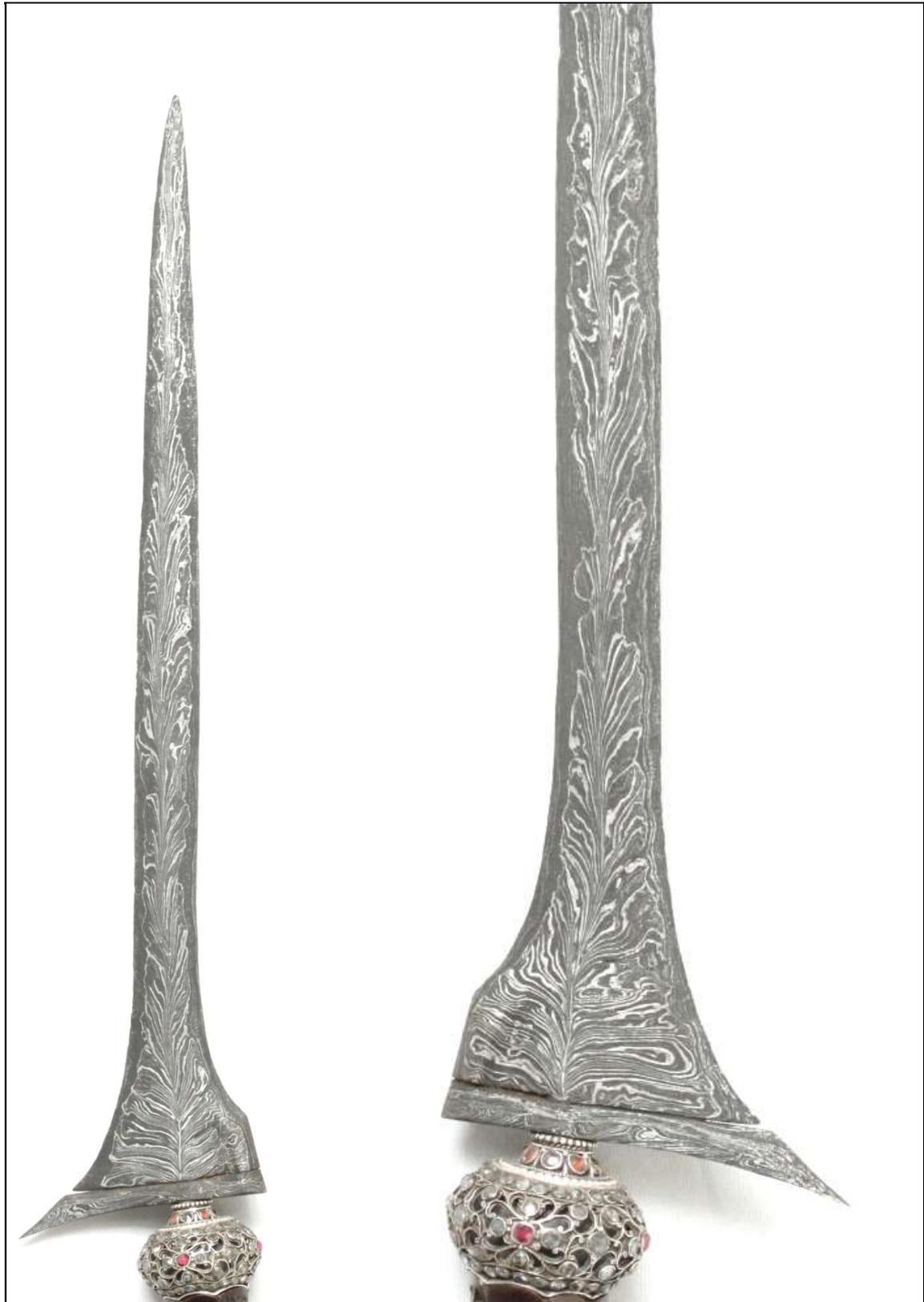
- . *Ron Genduru* “fishtail palm leaf”
- . *Ron Pakis* “angiopteris leaf”
- . *Blarak Ngirid/ Sineret* “coconut palm leaf”
- . *Naga Rangsang* “naga ready for attacking”
- . *Mayang Mekar* “blossoming areca palm”
- . *Eri Wader* “fish bone”
- . *Sekar Glagah* “Kans grass/ wild sugar cane flowers”
- . *Kenanga Ginubah* “string of ylang-ylang flowers”
- . *Kelabang Sayuta* “centipede”

According to the traditional Javanese spiritual teaching (*Kejawen*) & phenomenology, these styles of “leaf” *pamor* patterns symbolize the hope for the owner to achieve glory or a high position and they represent the fire element (*Agni*)<sup>7</sup>.

Because they are difficult to make, these diagonal *pamor* patterns are not always perfectly rendered and their identification could be confusing in some cases as will be seen on the following pictures.

**The transversal pattern styles** are less many and the most well-known ones are as follows: *Toya Mambeg* “still water”, *Pandan Iris* “sliced pandanus leaves”, and *Karawelang* “various barriers”.

**Other styles of *pamor miring* patterns** exist but cannot be classified as per the above categories, for instance *pamor Tambal*, etc.



**Picture 2.2.4:** An old straight blade showing a finely made *pamor* pattern identified as *Blarak Ngirid/ Sineret* “coconut palm leaf” or *Sekar Glagah* “Kans grass flowers”, and consisting of stacked V-shaped motifs along the center of the blade. It is deemed to increase the authority and leadership abilities of the kris owner.