

Chapter 2

Figural kris hilts from East Java/ Madura

East Java was the cradle of the kris since the great Majapahit kingdom (14th & 15th century) and possibly before (Singosari and Jenggala/ Kediri periods). Very few kris hilts dating from these periods have been identified & certified in the museum collections, but some hilts from the post-Majapahit era and assumed to have kept the Majapahit style were brought to Europe from Banten (West Java) and Blambangan (East Java) at the end of 16th and during the 17th century.

Some figural hilts from East Java & Madura are difficult to be attributed to a specific geographic area as they are widely distributed along the North Coast of Java (*pesisir*) and in Madura, and accordingly I will be very careful about the subject. These hilts can be classified in 5 categories as follows:

2.1. Antique East Java kris hilts in post-Majapahit style:

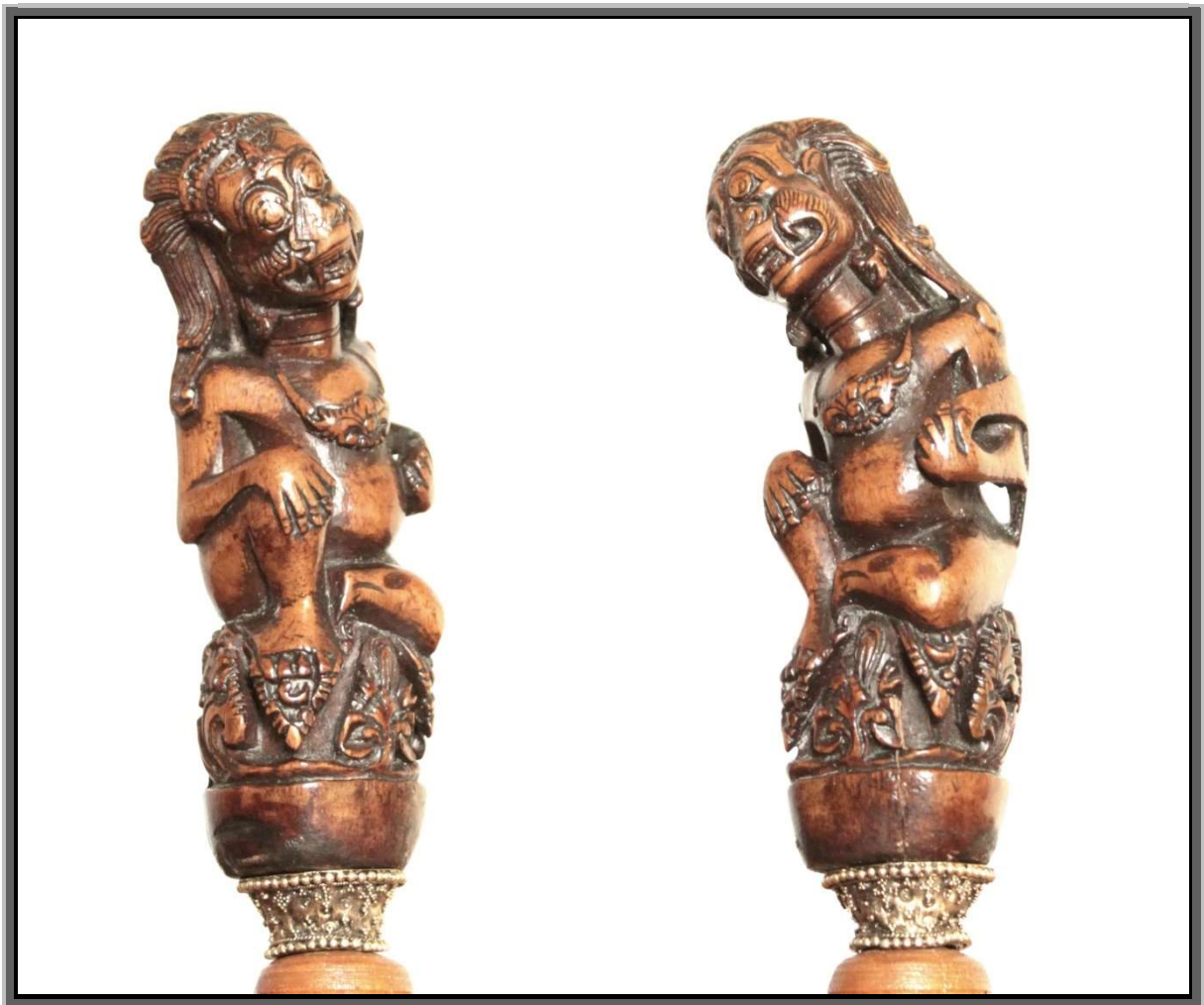


Figure 2.1.1: Antique kris hilt from Blambangan?

Materials: Wood/ Size: 9.5 cm

This very old hilt (from 17th century?) is estimated to originate from Blambangan (East Java). It depicts a *raksasa* (ogre) sitting on a *tumpal* throne and holding a cut human arm in his left hand, and is very typical of the hilts brought from Blambangan to Europe during the 16th & 17th century.

2.2. *Nyamba* or *wayang* style hilts from East Java:



Figure 2.2.1: *Nyamba* style hilt from East Java
Materials: Silver/ Size: 9.5 cm

The *Nyamba* style hilts are a specific and very old type of hilt from East Java, and they depict a *wayang* figure looking like a squatting demon on a *tumpal* throne with a crown and a *Garuda mungkur* (Garuda head) motif behind the head. This specimen was recently made (around 1990) but is representative of the traditional style. The old pieces are usually made from silver on a resin base.



**Figure 2.2.2: *Wayang* style hilt from East Java?
Materials: Ebony wood or buffalo horn/ Size: 8.7 cm**

This old and rare hilt is probably originating from East Java and depicts an unknown *wayang* figure squatting in *Pralambapada* position on a *tumpal* throne. It wears a crown and long hair, and it shows a friendly and meditating expression contrary to the demon hilts from Northern Java.

2.3. *Putrasatu* “prince” style hilts from East Java/ Madura:

These hilts are similar to the “position 2” hilts from Northern Java but with a more floral decoration and they can be interpreted as depicting a forest demon or vegetation god.



**Figure 2.3.1: *Putrasatu* style hilt from East Java
Materials: Buffalo bone/ Size: 9.2 cm**

This typical *putrasatu* hilt from East Java is probably dating from the mid-20th century. It depicts a stylized anthropomorphic figure with only the head being clearly visible (eyes, nose, teeth, and short hair in the back), and the body is hidden under floral vegetation.

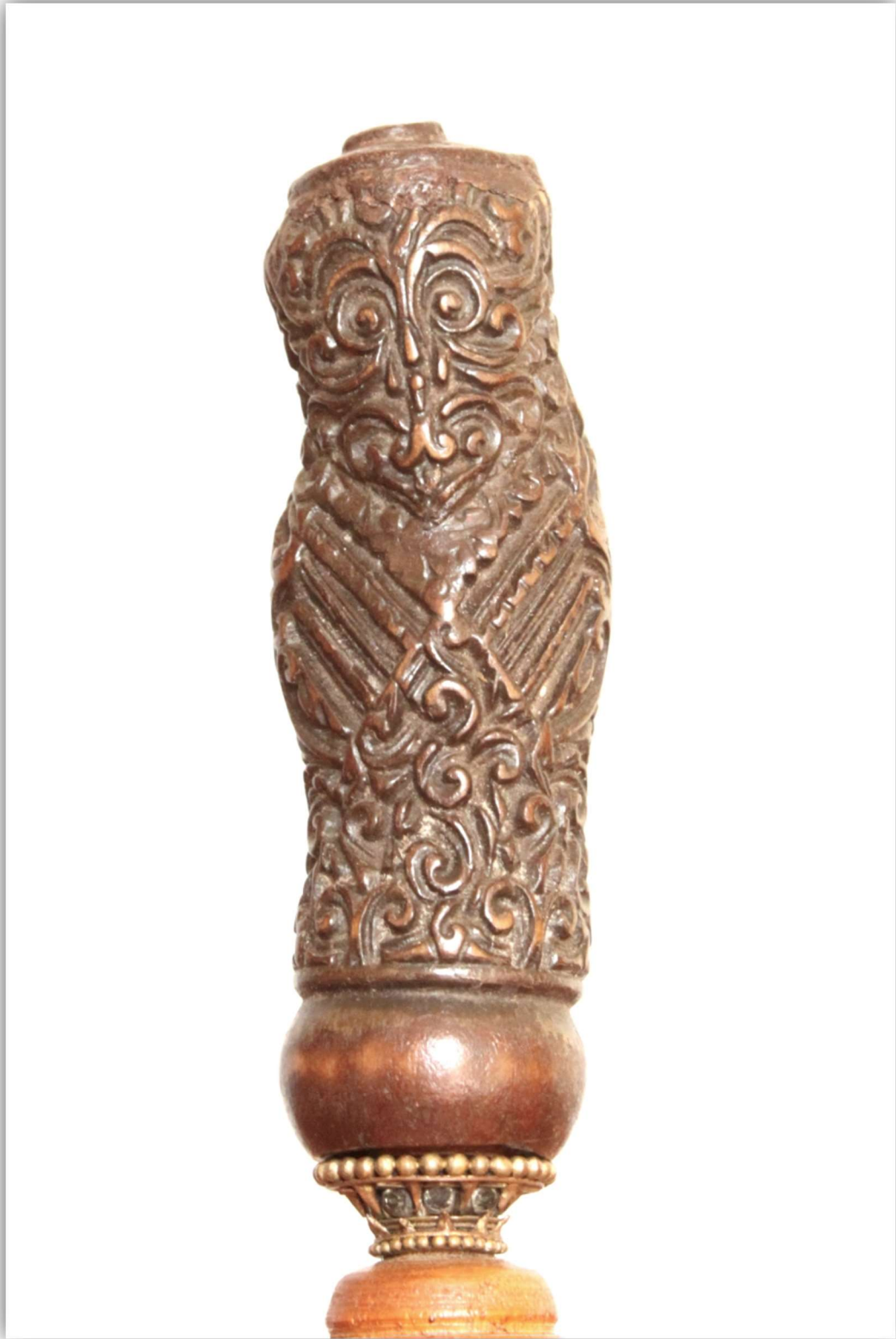


Figure 2.3.2: *Putrasatu* style hilt from East Java
Materials: Buffalo bone/ Size: 8.5 cm

This hilt with a dark patina is estimated to date from the mid-20th century. It depicts a stylized anthropomorphic figure with only the head & arms being visible, it wears a long hair in the back and the body is hidden under floral vegetation with spiral motifs.



Figure 2.3.3: *Putrasatu* style hilt from East Java
Materials: Deer antler or bone/ Size: 8 cm

This hilt is estimated to originate from East Java and to date from the mid-20th century. The figure has a clearly visible human face with hair in the back, the body is hidden under floral vegetation, and there are alternating *tumpal* motifs at the base.

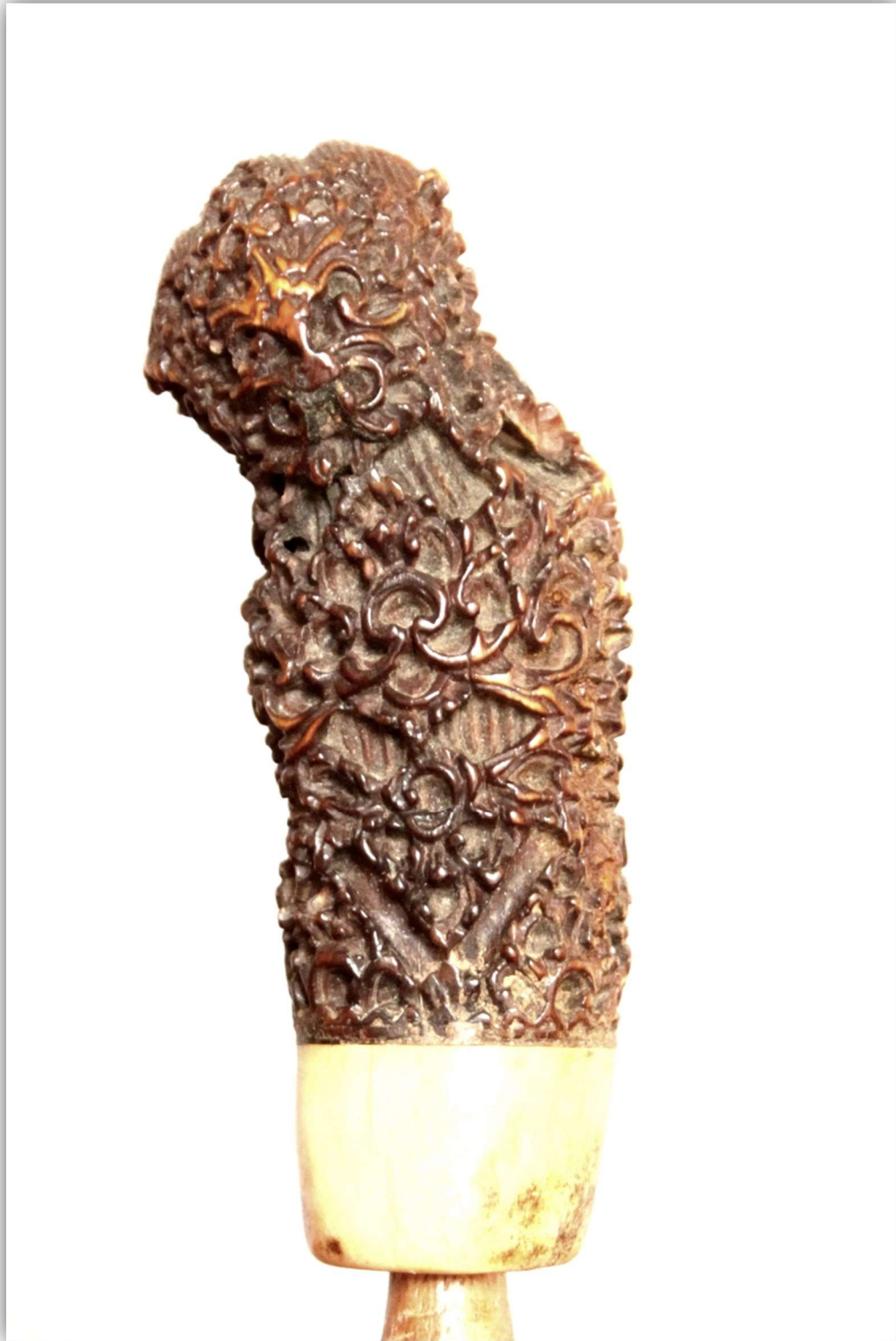


Figure 2.3.4: *Putrasatu* style hilt from East Java or Madura
Materials: Ivory/ Size: 8.5 cm

This old and rare hilt is estimated to originate from East Java or Madura and to date from the 19th century. The figure is hidden under floral vegetation but a stylized face and arms are barely visible on the front with curled hair in the back (vegetation god?), and there are alternating *tumpal* motifs at the base.



**Figure 2.3.5: *Putrasatu* style hilt from East Java or Madura
Materials: Marine ivory/ Size: 10 cm**

This hilt is estimated to originate from East Java or Madura and to date from the end of 19th or beginning of 20th century. It is finely carved and similar to the previous specimen, the figure is hidden under floral vegetation but a stylized face & arms are barely visible on the front with curly hair in the back, and there are alternating *tumpal* motifs at the base.



Figure 2.3.6: *Putrasatu* style hilt from East Java or Madura
Materials: Buffalo bone or deer antler/ Size: 9 cm

This *putrasatu* hilt with a peculiar design is estimated to date from the second half of 20th century. The figure is very similar to the type 2 demon hilts from Northern Java (crossed arms, legs position, meander belt, shield, alternating *tumpal* motifs at the base, spiral decoration), but the top of the face is hidden under a sort of helmet or mask covering the nose and eyes.



Figure 2.3.7: *Putrasatu* style hilt from East Java or Madura
Materials: *Kemuning* wood/ Size: 9.5 cm

This hilt is estimated to date from the mid-20th century. The figure is very similar to the type 2 demon hilts from Northern Java (crossed arms, legs position, long hair in the back, meander belt, *tumpal* motifs at the base), but some detailed features are different such as the small crown (and bun?) on top of the head, fangs, and the eyes with long lashes which are typical of East Java.

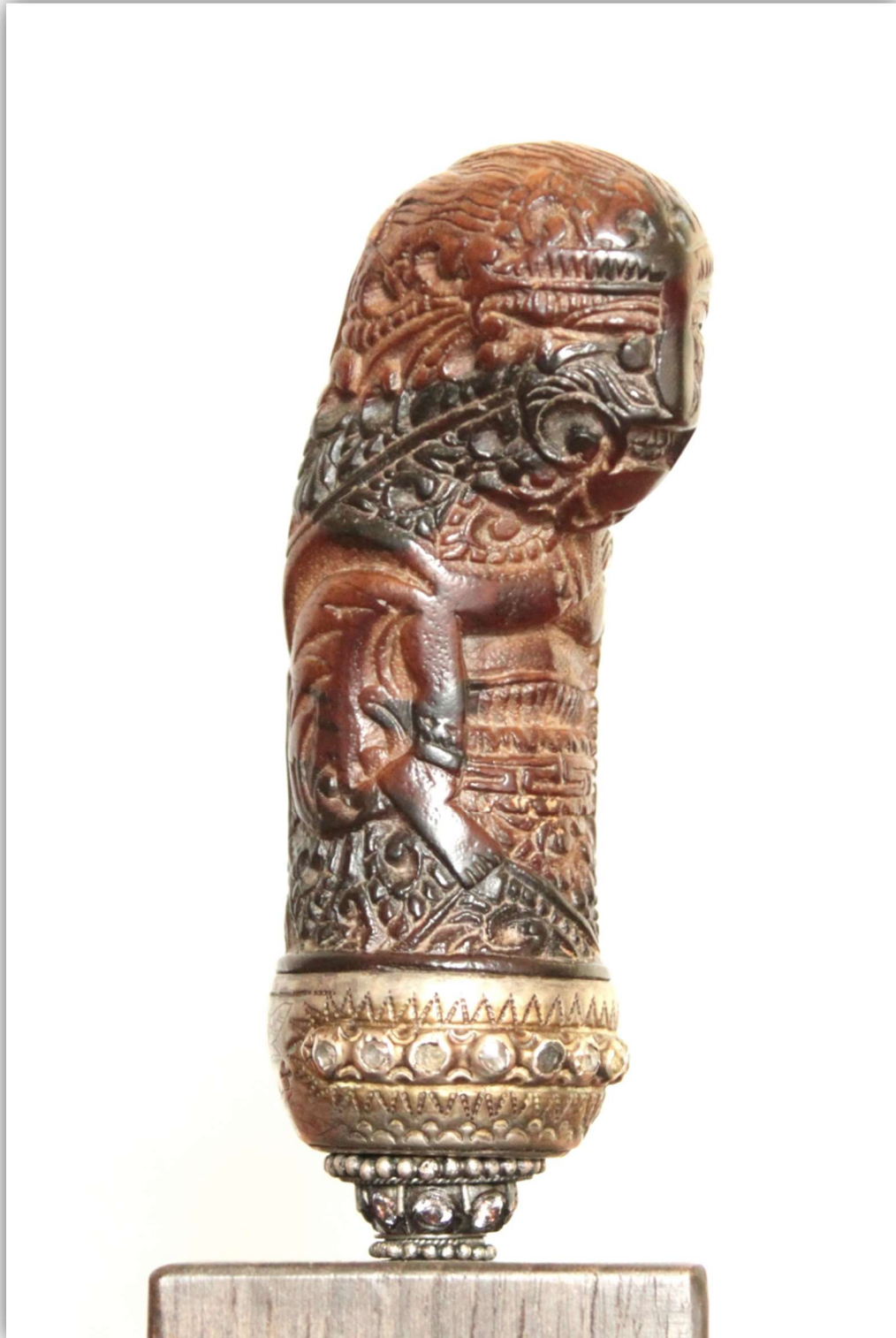


Figure 2.3.8: *Putrasatu* style hilt from East Java or Madura
Materials: Wood/ Size: 9.5 cm

This hilt made from *timoho pelet* wood is estimated to date from the first half of 20th century. The figure is similar to the type 2 demon hilts from Northern Java (crossed arms, right leg position, long hair in the back, teeth and moustache, meander belt), but some detailed features are different such as the nose shield, and the left leg is not visible. It includes a silver *selut* decorated with small stones.



Figure 2.3.9: *Putrasatu* style hilt from East Java or Madura
Materials: Marine ivory/ Size: 9.5 cm

This hilt is estimated to date from the end of 19th or beginning of 20th century. The figure is similar to the previous specimens but the style of floral decoration is peculiar and includes interlaced motifs and 6-petal flowers.

2.4. *Topi* “helmet” style hilts from Madura:

These hilts were born by the Madurese auxiliary soldiers (*barisan*) enrolled in the Dutch colonial army, and are also called *pulasir* “cuirassier”. They are decorated with both traditional Madurese motifs and Dutch military ones, but some older pieces only have a floral decoration under the helmet.

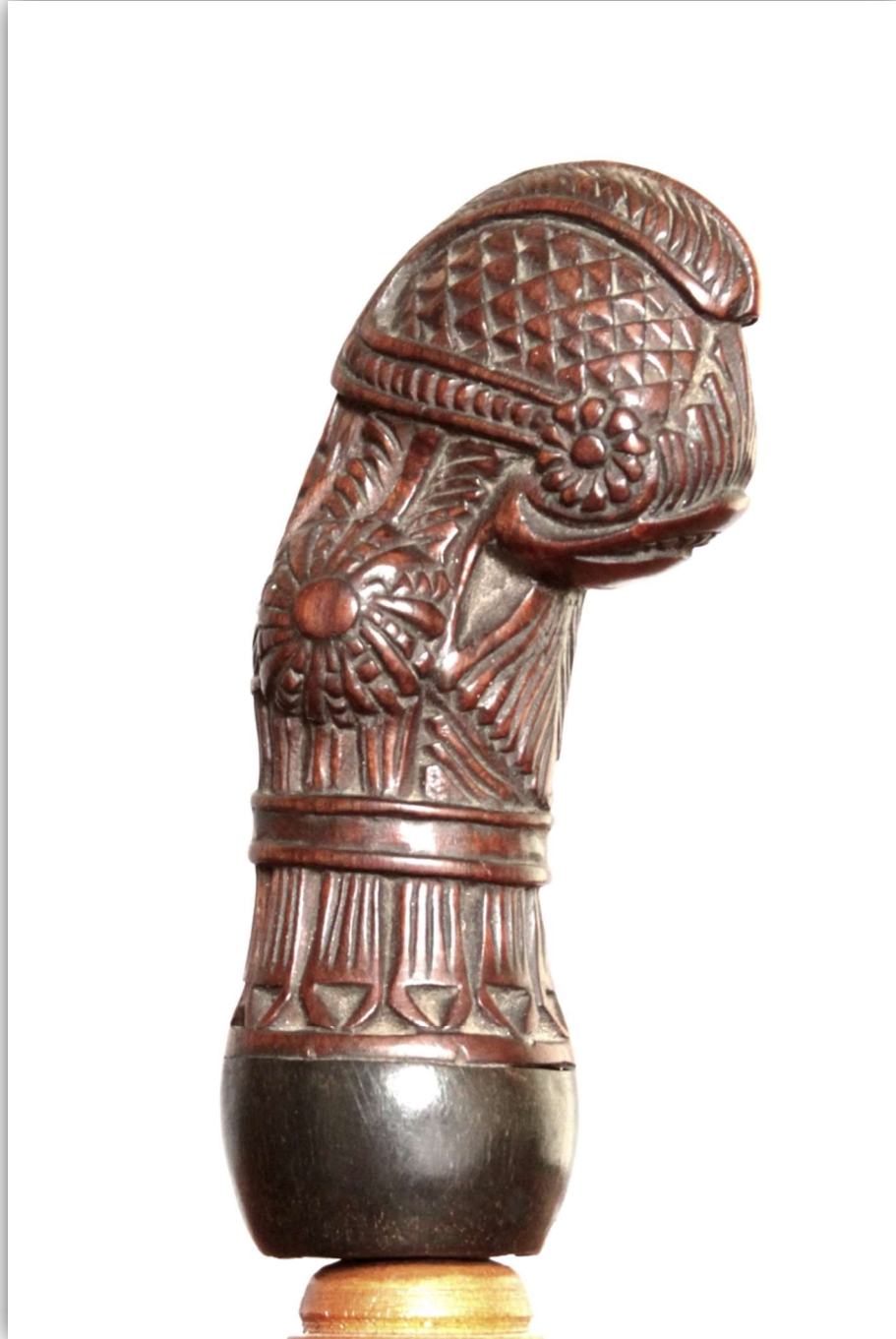


Figure 2.4.1: *Topi* or *pulasir* style hilt from Madura
Materials: Wood/ Size: 9 cm

This hilt is estimated to date from the mid-20th century, and it has a stylized design with a Dutch military helmet with a crest on top and a hidden face underneath, military epaulets on the sides, and draperies in the lower part.



Figure 2.4.2: *Topi* or *pulasir* style hit from Madura
Materials: Wood/ Size: 9 cm

This hilt is estimated to date from the mid-20th century, and it includes more Madurese and Dutch military motifs than the previous specimen: the military epaulets on the sides are clearly shown, there is a belt and a carved panel in the central part, and a meander belt with alternating tiger heads and winged dragons in the lower part.



Figure 2.4.3: *Topi* or *pulasir* style hit from Madura
Materials: Marine ivory/ Size: 8.8 cm

This rare hilt is estimated to date from the 19th century, and it only includes finely carved floral motifs under the helmet.



Figure 2.4.4: *Topi* or *pulasir* style hit from Madura
Materials: Marine ivory/ Size: 8 cm

This nice and rare hilt is estimated to date from the 19th century, and it includes a full Madurese & Dutch iconography namely: military helmet & epaulets, Dutch royal crown and Military Order of William cross on the front, and Madurese horse and winged dragon on the sides.