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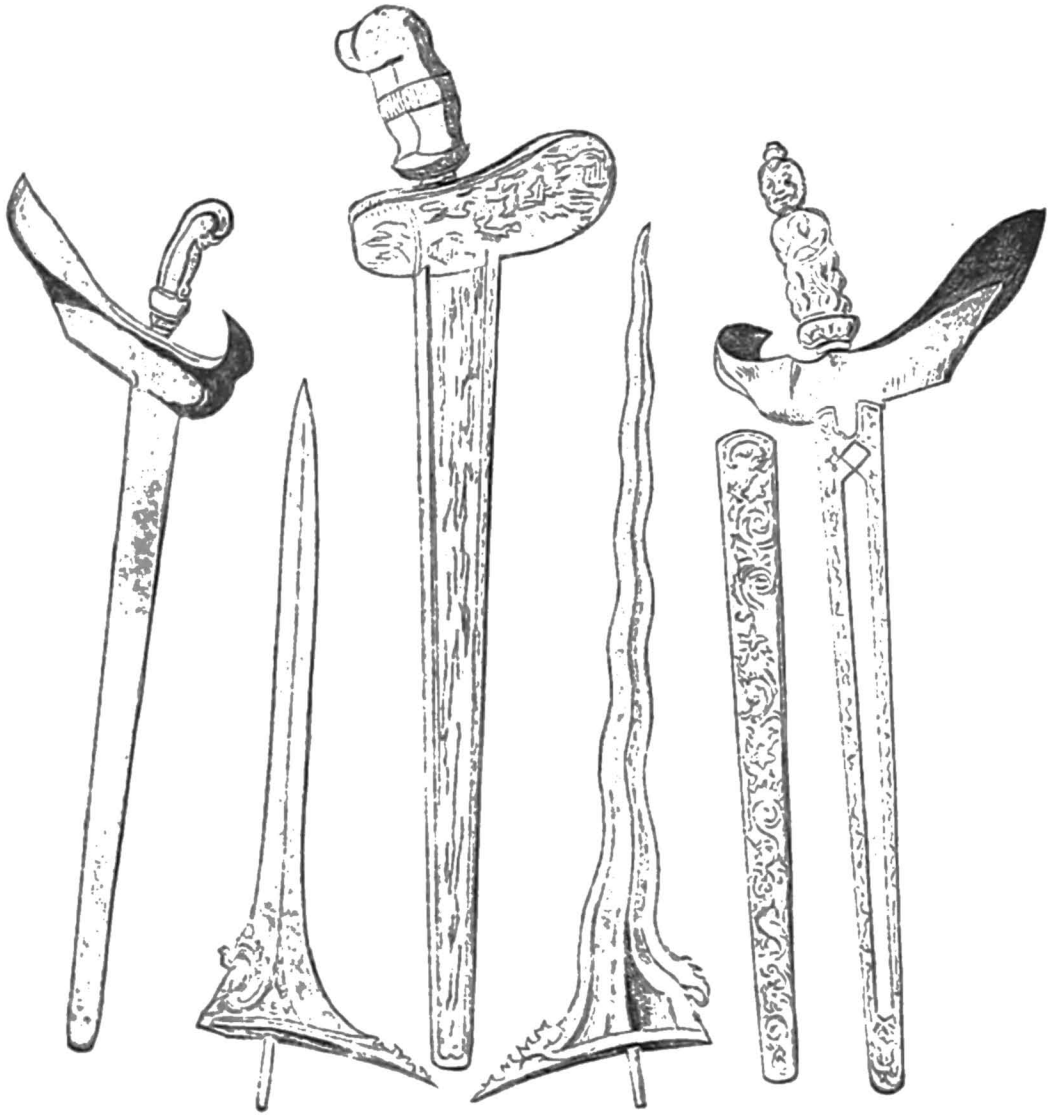
THE LAND OF KRIS AND SARONG



THE stir of camp and court, the state and pomp and pageantry of three such grandees as emperor, sultan, and resident in the one city, made such street-scenes in Solo as tempted the kodaker to constant play while the sun was high. Bands and marching troops were always to be seen in the street, and the native officials of so many different kinds made pictures of bewildering variety. The resident, returning from an official call, dashed past in a coach and four, with pajong-bearers hanging perilously on behind, and a mounted escort clattering after. Members of the imperial household staff were distinguished by stiff sugar-loaf caps or fezzes of white leather; and such privileged ones stalked along slowly, magnificently, each with a kris at the back of his belt, and always followed by one or two lesser minions. Those of superior rank went accompanied by a pajong-bearer balancing the great flat umbrella of rank above the distinguished one's head; and the precision with which the grandee kept his head within the halo of shadow,

or the bearer managed to keep such a true angle on the sun, were something admirable, and only to be accomplished by generations of the two classes practising their respective feats. The emperor's mounted troops were objects of greater interest, these dragoons wearing huge lacquered vizors or crownless caps over their turbaned heads, the regulation jackets, sarongs, and heavy kris, and bestriding fiery little Timor ponies. The native stirrup is a single upright bar of iron, which a rider holds between the great toe and its neighbor; and these troopers seemed to derive as much support from this firm toe-grip as booted riders do from resting the whole ball of the foot on our stirrups.

There is a labyrinthine passer at Solo, where open sheds and rustic booths have grown upon one another around several open court spaces, which are dotted with the huge mushrooms of palm-leaf umbrellas, and whose picturesqueness one cannot nearly exhaust in a single morning's round. The pepper- and fruit- and flower-markets are, of course, the regions of greatest attraction and richest feasts of color. The horn of plenty overflowed royally there, and the masses of bananas and pineapples, durians, nankos, mangosteens, jamboas, salaks, dukus, and rambutans seemed richer in color than we had ever seen before; and the brass-, the basket-, the bird-, the spice-, and the gum-markets had greater attractions too. The buyers were as interesting as the venders, and a frequent figure in these market groups that tempted the kodaker to many an instantaneous shot, regardless of the light,—better any muddy impression of that than none at all,—was the Dutch housewife on her morning rounds. I braved



JAVA, BALI, AND MADURA KRISES.
From Sir Stamford Raffles's "History of Java."

sunstroke and apoplexy in the hot sunshine, and trailed my saronged subjects down crowded aisles to open spots, to fix on film the image of these sockless matrons in their very informal morning dress. I lurked in booths and sat for endless minutes in opposite shops, with focus set and button at touch, to get a good study of Dutch ankles, when certain typical Solo *hausfraus* should return to and mount their carriage steps—only to have some loiterer's back obscure the whole range of the lens at the critical second.

We found pawnshops galore in this city full of courtiers and hangers-on of greatness, and such array of krises and curious weapons that there was embarrassment of choice. We left the superior shops of dealers in arms, where new blades, fresh from Sheffield or German works, were pressed upon us, and betook ourselves to the junk-shops and pawnshops, where aggregations of discarded finery and martial trappings were spread out. Books, silver, crystal, cutlery, jeweled decorations, medals, epaulets, swords, and krises in every stage of rust and dilapidation were found for sale.

The kris is distinctively the Malay weapon, and is a key to much of Malay custom and lore; and if the Japanese sword was "the soul of the Samurai," as much may be said for the kris of the Javanese warrior. The cutler or forger of kris-blades ranked first of all artisans. There are more than one hundred varieties of the kris known, the distinctive Javanese types of kris differing from those of the Malay Peninsula and the other islands, and forty varieties of kris being used in Java and its immediate dependencies. The kris used in Bali differs from that of Madura or Lombok,

and that of Solo from that used in West or Sundaese Java. These differences imply many curiously fine distinctions of long-standing importance in etiquette and tradition; yet the kris is a comparatively modern weapon—modern as such things go in Asia. No kris is carved on Boro Boedor or Brambanam walls, and its use cannot be traced further back than the thirteenth century, despite the legends of mythical Panji, who, it is claimed, devised the deadly crooked blade and brought it with him from India. When it was introduced from the peninsula it was instantly adopted, and all people wearing the kris were counted by that badge as subjects of Java. The kris is worn by all Javanese above the peasant class and over fourteen years of age, and is a badge of rank and station which the wearer never puts aside in his waking hours. Great princes wear two and even four kris at a time, and women of rank are allowed to display it as a badge. It is always thrust through the back of the girdle or belt, a little to the left, and at an angle, that the right hand may easily grasp the hilt; and its presence there, ready for instant use, has proved a great restraint to the manners of a spirited, hot-blooded people, and lent their intercourse that same exaggerated formality, mutual deference, and high decorum that equally distinguished the old two-sworded men of Japan. The kris is the warrior's last refuge, as the Javanese will run amuck, like other Malays, when anger, shame, or grief has carried him past all bounds, and, stabbing at every one in the way, friend or enemy alike, is ready then to take his own life.

The Javanese are still the best metal-workers in the

archipelago, and long displayed wonderful skill in tempering steel, in welding steel and iron together, and in giving the wavy blade fine veinings and damascenings. Those beautiful veinings, grained and knotted in wood, and other curious patternings of the blade, were obtained by soaking the blades, welded of many strips of hard and soft metal, in lime-juice and arsenic until the surface iron was eaten out. A wound from such a weapon is, of course, as deadly as if the kris were dipped in poison for that purpose solely; and from this arises the common belief that all kris-blades are soaked in toxic preparations. With the more general use of firearms, and the arming of the troops with European rifles, the kris remains chiefly a personal adornment, an article of luxury, and a badge of rank.

Solo has always been considered a later Toledo for its blades, and in the search for a really good, typical Solo kris I certainly looked over enough weapons to arm the sultan's guard. The most of them were disappointingly plain as to sheath and hilt, the boat-shaped wooden hilts having only enough carving on the under part to give the hand a firm grasp. We could not find a single Madura kris, with the curious totemic carvings on the handle; and all the finely ornamental krises, with gold, silver, or ivory handles inlaid with jewels, have long since gone to museums and private collections. One may now and then chance upon finely veined blades with mangosteen handles in plain, unpromising wood, and brass Sundanese sheaths; but after seeing the treasures of krises in the Batavia museum, one is little satisfied with such utilities, mere every-day serviceable weapons. Increasing tourist

travel will soon encourage the manufacture of ornamental crises, and in numbers to meet the certain fixed demand, so that later tourists will have better souvenirs than can be had now.

There is one whole street of sarong-shops in Solo, each little shop or open booth glowing with cloths of brilliant colors, and each shop standing in feudal dignity behind a tiny moat, with a mite of a foot-bridge quite its own. Solo sarongs presented many designs quite new to us, and the sarong-painters there employ a rich, dull, dark red and a soft, deep green in the long diamonds and pointed panels of solid color, relieved with borders of intricate groundwork, that tempt one to buy by the dozen. There were many sarongs, painted with four and five colors in fine, elaborate designs, that rose to ten and twenty United States gold dollars in value; but one's natural instincts protested against paying such prices for a couple of yards of cotton cloth, mere figured calico, forsooth, despite its artistic and individual merits. Our landlady at the Sleier had inducted us into much of the sarong's mysteries, qualities, and details of desirability, and we had the museum's rare specimens in mind; but we were distracted in choice, and the thing I desired, just any little scrap as an example of the *prang rusa*, or deer-fight, pattern, which only the imperial ones may wear, was not to be had anywhere in Solo. We looked in upon many groups of little women tracing out fine, feathery, first-outline designs in brown dye with their tiny funnel arrangements that are the paint-brushes of their craft; and we found one great cement-floored fabrik of sarongs, a regular factory or wholesale estab-

ishment, with many Chinese and native workmen. There whole sections of the sarong pattern were stamped at a stroke by lean Chinese, who used the same kind of tin stamping-blocks as are used in stamping embroidery patterns in Western lands. We knew there was such a factory for block-printed sarongs on Tenabang Hill in Batavia, but it was a shock, a disillusionment, to come upon such an establishment of virtually ready-made, "hand-me-down" sarongs in Solo.

There is a large Chinese population in Solo; and one has sufficient evidence of the wealth and prosperity of these Paranaks as one sees them driving past in handsome victorias, wearing immaculate duck suits, patent-leather shoes, and silk hose, with only the ignoble pigtail, trailing away from the derby hat and disappearing shamefully inside the collar, to betray them. These rich Paranaks sit rigid and imperturbable, with folded arms, the very model of good form, smoking long black cheroots, and viewing all people afoot with undisguised scorn. One need not possess a Californian's bitter anti-Chinese sentiments to have this spectacle irritate him, and to almost wish to see the plutocrats pitched out of their "milords" and the Javanese Jehu drive over them. One easily understands the hatred that Dutch and natives alike entertain for these small traders, middlemen, and usurers, who have driven out all competitors, and fatten on the necessities of the people. Although these island-born Chinese have adopted so many European fashions in dress and luxurious living, they are still Celestials, never cutting the queue nor renouncing the tinsel household altars.

Solo's Chinatown, or Tjina kampong, is a little China complete, barring its amazing cleanliness and order without odors other than those of the cook-shops, where sesame-oil sizzles and smells quite as at home in "big China." There were three great weddings in progress on one "lucky day" in Solo, and each house-front was trimmed with flags, lanterns, garlands, and tinsel flowers; orchestras tinkled and thumped, and great feasts were spread in honor of the brides' coming to the new homes. Every one was bidden to enter and partake; and we were hospitably urged to enter at each gorgeous door, and rice-wine, champagne, painted cakes, and all the fruits of two zones were generously pressed upon us. The thumps of an approaching band drew us from one sarong-shop, and we saw a procession advancing, with banners and huge lanterns borne aloft. One felt sure the remarkable train must have issued from the palace gates until the faces were in range, and there followed the gorgeous red Chinese wedding-chair, and all the bride's jewels and gowns and gilded slippers, carried about on cushions like sovereign regalia. Men in uniform bore palanquins full of varnished pig, and mountains of the pies and cakes and nameless things of Chinese high-holiday appetites, that roused the gaping envy of the street crowds. Urchins cheered and danced and ran with the band much as they do elsewhere; and the strangers, captivated with the sights, drove beside the gaudy procession until sated with the Oriental splendors and Celestial opulence of a Solo marriage feast.

The street life of Solo could well entertain one for many days. Native life is but the least affected by

foreign ways, and the local color is all one could wish. There are drives of great beauty about the town, with far views of those two lovely symmetrical peaks, Merapi and Merbaboe, on one side, and of the massive Mount Lawu on the other. The temple ruins at Suku, at the foot of Mount Lawu, twenty-six miles southeast of Solo, are the most puzzling to archæologists, least known and visited of all such remains in Java. They are of severe form and massive construction, without traces of any carved ornament, and the solid pylons, truncated pyramids, and great obelisks, standing on successive platforms or terraces, bear such surprising resemblance to the monuments of ancient Egypt and Central America that speculation is offered a wide range and free field. The images found there are ruder than any other island sculptures, and everything points to these strange temples having been the shrines of an earlier, simpler faith than any now observed or of which there is any record. These Suku temples were discovered in 1814 by Major Johnson, the British officer residing at the native court of Solo. They were then unknown to the natives; there were no inscriptions found, nothing in native records or traditions to lead to any solution of their mysteries; and no further attempts have been made toward discovering the origin of these vast constructions since Sir Stamford Raffles's day.

When M. Désiré de Charnay came to Java, in 1878, to study the temple ruins whose puzzling resemblance to Central American structures had puzzled archæologists, all of government assistance was lent him. He had driven only eight leagues from Solo toward Mount

Lawu, when his carriage broke down; he spent the night at a village, and returned the next morning to Solo, "sufficiently humiliated with" his "failure," he wrote. He did not repeat the attempt, as there was a great fête occurring at the emperor's palace which occupied his remaining days. He says that every one at Solo consoled him for his failure to reach the Suku temples by saying that the visible ruins there were only the attempted restorations of an epoch of decadence, and dated only from the fourteenth century. M. de Charnay quotes all that Sir Stamford Raffles and Fergusson urge as to the striking and extraordinary resemblance of these particular temples to those of Mexico and Yucatan; and as ethnologists admit that the Malays occupied the archipelagos from Easter Island to Madagascar, he thinks it easy to believe that they or a parent race extended their migrations to the American continent, and that if this architectural resemblance be an accident, it is the only one of its kind in the universe.¹

The three-domed summit of the mountain is visited now by Siva worshipers, who make offerings and burn incense to the destroying god who manifests himself there, and the region is one to tempt a scientist across the seas to exploit it, and should soon invite the attention of the exploring parties which Mr. Morris K. Jesup has enlisted in the search for proofs of early Asiatic and American contact.

¹ "Le Tour du Monde," "Six Semaines à Java," par M. Désiré de Charnay, volume for 1880.