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Review: [untitled]

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Reviewed work(s):

Keris and Other Malay Weapons by G. B. Gardner

Source: *Folklore*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Sep., 1940), pp. 232-233

Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of Folklore Enterprises, Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1256695>

Accessed: 25/06/2009 15:05

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KERIS AND OTHER MALAY WEAPONS. By G. B. GARDNER. 4to, pp. 138. Singapore, 1936: Bernard Quaritch. 6s. 6d.

THIS is a very comprehensive account of the Malay *kéris*, and of a number of other weapons of the Malayan area, most of them of analogous type. Even firearms, however, and defensive armour find a place, as well as metal bolas, which we do not remember to have seen reported previously from the Malay Archipelago.

The kris itself appears to be derived from the sting of a ray used as a dagger and copied originally in the form of the *kéris majapahit*, which appears to be the oldest form of this weapon, and is a much simpler one than the more familiar wavy kris. It is interesting to be told that meteoric iron was used in early krises to give the damask effect of inlay, provided by the nickel in it, and the earliest krises were made of "needles," i.e. narrow slivers of iron, welded together. Just such a technique is employed in the unadministered areas between Assam and Burma. There too the corresponding weapon, the *dao*, is drawn over the shoulder like a Malay kris. So too oaths taken by drinking water in which a spear-head has been dipped offer a parallel to the Malay oath on water in which a kris has been plunged.

A good deal of folklore is mentioned in connection with weapons. There are various ways of testing whether or no a kris is lucky, and sometimes one of these weapons becomes so formidable as a result of the number of lives it has eaten or for other reasons (the power of a kris increases with each life it takes) that it may kill if merely pointed, like the Australian Pointing Stick, and Dr. Callenfels is quoted of a case in which such power was tried out in all seriousness against a Hollander regiment, but in vain. One spear is mentioned as having become so powerful that it had to be kept under restraint, like the spear of Lugh, for the last time it got loose it killed ninety and nine persons. On the other hand however various methods of achieving invulnerability are mentioned.

There are one or two mistakes. The so-called "ibex" horns, mentioned as a probable model for the wavy-bladed kris, are by no means those of an ibex but of the blackbuck (*Antelope*

*cervicapra*, Blandford). Again the statement on p. 101 that it is impossible to shoot a line from a blowpipe is in error. The Kukis of Assam use a dart with a line from their little toy-like blowguns, while a captive dart is also used from a blowgun for harpooning and retrieving fish on the Malabar coast. The author fails to point out that the shape of the *sampir* or cross-piece at the top of the sheath of the *kéris* is modelled on that of a boat (e.g. pl. 15, fig. 1), a significant feature in Indonesian culture, where the boat *motif* is often to be found in buildings, coffins, etcetera. In the last line on p. 65, "44" is a misprint for 46.

The volume is extremely well illustrated with ample photographs and drawings, and will be found particularly useful to museums and to collectors of Indonesian weapons.

J. H. HUTTON

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DANISH BALLADS. Selected and with an Introduction by AXEL OLRİK. Translated by E. M. Smith-Dampier. Princeton University Press. London: Milford. 17s. 6d.

THE publication of this volume of translations from the Danish brings within reach of the English reader a number of lovely and satisfying ballads, that language obstacles had hitherto barred. The collection is a representative one, selected by the late Axel Olrik from Grundtvig's monumental work, "Danmarks Gambe Folkeviser" and contains examples of all the various kinds of Danish ballads, warrior, magic, historical, satirical, etc. It is provided with an admirable introduction on the rise and scope of the genre in Denmark. Olrik here indicates the dependence of the ballad on the dance, how it originated as a sung accompaniment to the dances of Chivalry and declined during the fifteenth century with the introduction of the polka. The ballads were kept alive by oral tradition; about 1550 they were first written down, by some of the noble ladies of the time.

We may be indebted to the aristocracy for their preservation, but it is the surprisingly democratic tone of the mediaeval Danish ballads, which strikes us in general, in a comparison