

Durga.

From Central to East Java, Blambangan.



CLD

Even rarer than the aforementioned handles, there is a veiled female form, which evokes the goddess Durga. This model has been present in European museum collections since the beginning of the 17th century, and therefore suggests that it has existed at least since the 16th century.

Prototypes of this kriss handle shape come from Java, but similar or inspired handles can be found on the island of Bali.

This representation of the goddess Durga in her veiled figuration is not in doubt in Europe but is still discussed by some Javanese scholars who, on the grounds of the non-existence of this representation in statuary, recognise this handle only as "Wadon", which means "female form".

In order to understand this aspect, it is necessary to refer to written sources of the 15th century, such as the Tantu Panggelaran, Sudamala, Kidung Sri Tanjung and Korawasrama. These texts teach us that the Demon Raksasi Durga was none other than Uma (Parvati), Shiva's companion who was condemned for her transgressions. In the poem or Kakawin Sudamala, written in the 15th century from the Mahabharata, Uma is unfaithful and takes Brahma as her lover. Shiva, in the form of Batara Guru, very angry and ashamed, curses her and transforms her into the demon Raksasi Bhatari Durga also called Ranini for a period of twelve years. From then, Durga hides her ugliness under a veil, for his sight would kill mere mortals. She and her escort, among whom is the demon Kalika, are condemned to reside in the cemetery of



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