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Provenance report regarding Dolk met schede (lading belajoeng lama) en Lans met schede (toembak djangat)

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Provenance report regarding Dolk met schede (*lading belajoeng lama*) en Lans met schede (*toembak djangat*)

Klaas Stutje

 <p><i>Photo: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.nr. RV-761-105</i></p>	Custodian	NMVW Museum Volkenkunde
	Current possessor	Dutch State
	Inventory number	RV-761-105
	Material/technique	Horn, silver, wood, iron
	Measurements	37 x 3.5 cm; blade 25 cm
 <p><i>Photo: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.nr. RV-761-114</i></p>	Custodian	NMVW Museum Volkenkunde
	Current possessor	Dutch State
	Inventory number	RV-761-114
	Material/technique	Wood, copper, iron
	Measurements	184 cm; width of the tip 3 cm; length of the sheath 22 cm

Summary of findings

These two weapons are part of a large collection of 264 objects that were donated in January 1890 by a captain of the Dutch colonial army, W.G.A.C. Christan (1854-1915), to 's-Rijks Ethnographisch Museum. We have found no archival evidence about the circumstances under which Christan acquired the two weapons or other objects in the collection. An analysis of the entire RV-761-series suggests that he did not take the objects directly from the battlefield but selected the weapons out of historical and ethnographical interest. According to Christan, the dagger was from “the time of the Sultan”, i.e. before 1860. Based on the typographical features we can conclude that it is a traditional weapon of the Makassan and Buginese cultures in South Sulawesi. However, we have found no further archival evidence confirming Christan’s dating or provenance from South Sulawesi. The spear was reportedly carried as a dignitary symbol of a *vorst* (chief or monarch) and has a Dayak name, but we have found no information to provide more context.

Reconstruction provenance

[no date] - after 1883

[...]

After 1883 - January 1890

W.G.A.C. Christan

NL-LdnRMV-A1-15-75, letter of Christan to Serrurier, dated 5 January 1890.

January 1890 – today

Rijks Ethnografisch Museum (today NMVW Museum Volkenkunde)

Object information

The lading beladjoeng lama (*lading belajung lama*, knife/sword from old times) is a single-edged dagger of the *badik raja* type, and is a traditional weapon of the Makassan and Buginese cultures in South Sulawesi.¹ The blade is 25 centimeters long, with a thick and almost straight back, ending in a drop-point tip, and with a convex and belly-shaped edge. These features are typical of this type of dagger. It is forged with a *pamor* pattern made by welding together layers of iron and nickel. The handle is made of yellow-brown horn at a 45 degree angle from the blade, and has a decorative metal ring, or *selut*, at the grip. The sheath is made of wood covered with silver plate, chased on one side with six flowers, on the other with two flowers and five hexagonal figures, and around the edges with feather-shaped ornaments. The throat of the sheath, which was probably a later replacement, is protruding on the edge-side and the shoe is decorated with a *tumpal* motif.² This type of weapon was used on the

¹ The author wishes to thank Mansyur Sammy and John Klein Nagelvoort for this information: Email from John Klein Nagelvoort, curator Museum Bronbeek, 12 February 2021; Email from Mansyur Sammy, expert of Banjarese history and culture, 22 June 2021.

² NMVW Inventory card RV-761-105.

battlefield. The decorations suggest that it was owned by a person of higher social status. There are many South Sulawesi daggers of various types in Dutch museum collections.

The spearhead of the toembak djangat (*tumbak jangat*, *jangat* spear) is also forged with a *pamor* pattern. The shaft is made of brown wood, with a brass socket on top with two decorative wings with short hooks on opposite sides, and a triangular shaped engraved motif. The sheath is conical and painted black, and covers the spearhead. The entire length of the spear is 184 centimeters, and the length of the spearhead is 19 centimeters.³ The decorative wings suggest that it was owned by a person of higher social status.

Provenance report

The RV-761-series is a collection of 264 weapons and ethnographic objects, mostly from Kalimantan, that was donated in 1890 to 's-Rijks Ethnographisch Museum, a predecessor of today's NMVW Museum Volkenkunde. The donor was Willem Gerardus Antonius Cornelis Christan. At the time of the donation, he was a captain in the Dutch colonial army, temporarily on furlough in the Netherlands.

Born in 1854 in the old garrison town of Grave as a son of a medical officer, Christan joined the Dutch military in 1869 and was transferred to the colonial army five years later. He had fought in Aceh in 1878-1880 and in South Kalimantan in 1883, and in his future military career, he would be deployed in Lombok and Bali in 1894, in Aceh 1896-1897, and in Jambi in 1901-1902, reaching the rank of Major General in 1904. For his actions on the battle field he was decorated several times: in 1880 the Military William Order 4th class for military operations in Aceh, in 1884 the Honorary Sabre for operations in South Kalimantan, in 1895 the Military William Order 3rd class for operations in Lombok, and in 1903 the Order of the Netherlands Lion for operations in Jambi.⁴



Portrait of W.G.A.C. Christan,
Collection Bronbeek, inv. no.
1916/08-1-1.

³ Albert G. van Zonneveld, *Traditionele wapens van Borneo, De uitrusting van de koppensnellers: Deel II, Speren en blaasroeren* (Leiden: Sunfield Publishing, 2017), 55.

⁴ NL-HaNA, Oorlog / Stamboeken Officieren KL, 2.13.04, inv.nr. 622, folio 19.

The *badik raja* is of a South Sulawesi style, but we have found no evidence of travels or other engagements of Christan with this region before 1890. Instead, in a letter to the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum of December 1889 Christan indicated that he had assembled the collection over the last seven years in Borneo, where he was deployed from 1883 onwards.⁵ It seems obvious to connect the provenance of the objects to military actions on 20 September 1883, for which he was decorated with the Honorary Sabre. On that day, he participated in the attack on a *benteng* north of Muara Teweh (Kabupaten Barito Utara, Central Kalimantan) along the Barito river. This *benteng*, built on the Mandoeroeijan-hill (present-day name unknown, near the village of Lahei), was defended by 150 fighters under command of Panglima Ali (?-?). This runaway Acehnese prisoner of war fought on the side of Sultan Muhammad Seman (?-1905), a son of Antasari (1797-1862) who, after the latter's death in 1862, became the principal leader of the Banjarese-Dayak resistance against the Dutch.⁶ In the expedition, Christan was a senior lieutenant-adjutant, but because the captain in charge was ill, he was instructed to disembark and lead the attack on the hill and conquer the benteng with 176 soldiers and three warships. He succeeded and the Dutch troops killed Panglima Ali and many of his fighters.⁷ After the conquest of the Mandoeroeijan-hill, the Dutch troops took three yellow flags of Sultan Muhammad Seman, several documents, four lilla's (canons), 25 rifles and blunderbusses, and many lances, *Mandau* (swords) and *klewang* (machetes).⁸

Is this war booty related to the RV-761-collection? First of all, we do not find the reported flags, documents, lilla's or firearms from Mandoeroeijan-hill in the RV-761-collection. With regards to the other weapons, John Klein Nagelvoort points out that it is unlikely that Christan, who was ranked first lieutenant, was allowed to keep any of them, and certainly not in large numbers. Officially, the acquisition of weapons in private possession was a privilege reserved for senior officers, and weapons were usually transferred to garrison towns.⁹ It is more probable, Klein Nagelvoort suggests, that Christan collected most of the objects at the time when he was adjutant of military commander H.C.A. Ruempol (1838-1915) of the *Zuid- en Ooster Afdeling van Borneo*, an area roughly equal to today's South Kalimantan. Christan occupied this largely administrative position between February 1886 and September 1887, before he departed to the Netherlands on furlough for medical reasons. In this capacity, Christan worked at the military garrison in the town of Banjarmasin, Fort Tatas, and probably had access to the depots where war booty was stored. Banjarmasin town also had several markets where artisanal products were produced and traded, and where merchant communities from across the archipelago and beyond had settled. Yet, we have found no archival evidence substantiating the assumption that Christan derived his collection from either the weapon depots in Fort Tatas or the Banjarmasin markets.

Either way, in November 1887 Christan departed to the Netherlands on a furlough of two years to recover from chronic colitis, taking the weapon collection with him. This furlough was extended a few

⁵ NL-LdnRMV-A1-15-74, letter of Christan to Serrurier, dated 31 December 1889; NL-HaNA, KdK 1841-1897, 2.02.04, inv.nr. 2617: KB 10-06-1884, no. 44.

⁶ In fact, Sultan Muhamad Seman descended from the two most powerful families in the region: the Antasari's and the Surapati's: Sjamsuddin, "Fighting Dutch Rule", 195-198.

⁷ Sjamsuddin, "Fighting Dutch Rule," 273-277; "O.-Indische berichten", *Opregte Haarlemsche Courant*, 28 November 1883.

⁸ Ibidem; G.J. Van Kooten, "De vermeestering der Benteng Mandoeroeian in de Zuider en Ooster afdeeling van Borneo op den 20 September 1883", *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift* 15 nr. 7 (1 juli 1884), p. 8.

⁹ Email John Klein Nagelvoort, curator Museum Bronbeek, 3 March 2021.

times, and on 9 August 1890 he returned again for service in the Indies' colonial army.¹⁰ From correspondence in the archive of Museum Volkenkunde, we learn that he donated his weapon collection to the 's-Rijks Ethnographisch Museum in January 1890, for which he received the gold Erepenning voor Verdiensten jegens Openbare Verzamelingen (Honorary Medal for Merits toward Museum Collections) a year later.¹¹

The RV-761-collection

The impression that Christan did not collect weapons directly from the battlefield is also supported by a further analysis of the list of 264 objects in the RV-761-series.¹² First of all, the good shape and high quality of the collection is striking. All of the registered 127 swords and daggers, and most of the 53 other weapons (lances, blowpipes and arrows), contain a fitting sheath, suggesting that they were not collected from a chaotic battlefield. Secondly, roughly one third of the collection (81 out of 264 objects) consists of ethnographic items such as musical instruments, costumes, hats, and fishing equipment. Particularly remarkable is a group of 26 baskets and wickerwork from the island of Bangka, which seems to have a different provenance than the other items in the collection. Thirdly, looking at the stated region of origin, around a quarter of the objects (63 out of 264) is not from South Kalimantan. Many of these objects come from other areas in Kalimantan (Kotawaringin, Sampit, Samarinda, Sarawak, and Kutai), but a few are indicated to have come from Java, South Sulawesi, the Sulu archipelago, and Bangka. On top of that, some items are described as being of a distinct Arab, Acehnese, Chinese, Javanese, or Buginese style. Apart from the Acehnese-style weapons and the baskets from Bangka (relatively close to the garrison town of Palembang in South Sumatra), none of these items are from regions where Christan was stationed before 1890. This, again, indicates that they are not directly linked to his military activities.

The elaborate typographical descriptions of Christan's objects in the Staatscourant were written by Johann Schmeltz (1839-1909), who was a curator in 's Rijks Ethnographisch Museum.¹³ However, a few remarks in these descriptions and in one of Schmeltz' articles can be attributed to Christan's handwritten notebook.¹⁴ They provide details about the provenance of the objects and give an impression of Christan's expertise. RV-761-40, for instance, is a double edged sword, which according to Christan was of an Arab type.¹⁵ Item number RV-761-103 is "an antique iron arrow," the bow of which Christan was able to locate nowhere in Borneo.¹⁶ A sabre with number RV-761-36 was described as the weapon of "the insurgent Pembakoel Kendit," who can be identified as the anti-Dutch fighter Pembekal

¹⁰ "Stoomvaartberichten", *Haagsche courant*, 12 August 1890.

¹¹ NL-LdnRMV-A1-15-75, letter of Christan to Serrurier, dated 5 January 1890; NL-HaNA, KdK 1841-1897, 2.02.04, inv.nr. 3004: KB 12 January 1891, no. 10.

¹² This list, derived from the Museums' database TMS, corresponds with a handwritten notebook of Christan: NL-LdnRMV, serie-archief 761, "Etnographische verzameling van voorwerpen v/h eiland Borneo, aangeboden door W.G.A.C. Christan, kapt. der inf. O.I.L.." See also the long list published as a supplement to the *Nederlandsche Staatscourant*: "Beschrijving van de door den heer Christan aan de Nederlandsche Regeering, ter plaatsing in 's Rijks Ethnographisch Museum, aangeboden verzameling van wapens, krijgstoehoeftuigen enz." *Nederlandsche Staatscourant*, 15 September 1891, no. 216, pp. 1-13. 22 of the original objects seem to be missing.

¹³ Schmeltz also depicted the weapons in: "Beiträge zur Ethnographie von Borneo I," *Archives internationales d'ethnographie* III (1890) image xix, 7; and in "Beiträge zur Ethnographie von Borneo II," *Archives internationales d'ethnographie* V (1892) image xvii, 2a, b and c.

¹⁴ "Beschrijving van de..."; J.D.E. Schmeltz, "Beiträge zur Ethnographie von Borneo, II," *Archives internationales d'ethnographie* V (1892) pp. 232-238.

¹⁵ Schmeltz, "Beiträge zur Ethnographie von Borneo II," 233: "...nach mittheilung des Hern Hauptmann Christan."

¹⁶ "Beschrijving van de...", p. 6: "volgens opgave van den schenker antieke ijzeren pijl."; "Boog in Borneo nergens door mij aangetroffen": NL-LdnRMV, serie-archief 761, "Etnographische verzameling van voorwerpen v/h eiland Borneo, aangeboden door W.G.A.C. Christan, kapt. der inf. O.I.L.", nr. 103.

Kendet (?-1825) who revolted against the Dutch and was executed in 1825.¹⁷ Christan also commented that a Keris Majapahit (RV-761-86) was of high importance to the local population, while a sabre (RV-761-26) typically belonged to a Malay chief.¹⁸ These and other remarks suggest that Christan had typographical, historical, and ethnographic interest and expertise in the weapons he collected. How Christan acquired these objects, and whether or not he selected the weapons after they were taken from the battlefield is not clear.

RV-761-105

In Schmeltz' *Staatsblad* descriptions of the weapons in the RV-761-series, three objects were stated to originate from the "sultan's period." One of them is the *badik raja* RV-761-105. Even though we have seen that descendants of the Antasari and Surapati families continued to refer to themselves as sultans, in this Dutch source "the sultan's period" can only refer to the period before 11 June 1860, when the Dutch formally abolished the Banjarmasin sultanate and installed direct colonial rule. The basis on which Schmeltz or Christan determined the age of the *badik raja* remains unclear. The supposedly old age of the weapon is also reflected in the attributed Malay name: *Lading belajoeng lama*, which means knife/sword from old times.¹⁹

Other than with most other weapons, neither Christan or Schmeltz provide information regarding its regional origin. In an article, Schmeltz indicated that the weapon came from Eastern Kalimantan ("Ost Borneo"), but the inventory card in the NMVW-archive states "Southeast Borneo." If we assume that the weapon is indeed a *badik raja* of Makassan or Buginese cultural origin, it can either originate from South Sulawesi directly, or from Buginese communities in Kalimantan. Historically, there was a Buginese presence in the area of present day Kabupaten Tanah Bumbu in South Kalimantan, and there was a Buginese merchant's quarter in Banjarmasin town. In East Kalimantan, Buginese influence was even larger.²⁰ We have found no additional information establishing one of these routes as the provenance of the *badik raja*.

RV-761-114

RV-761-114 is one of the seven items in the RV-761-series that is attributed to a sultan or another monarch. Christan called the weapon a "*vorstenwapen*" and Schmeltz described the weapon as a "dignitary symbol of a *vorst*." In Dutch this word can only refer to a ruler of the highest rank.²¹ It is not specified which ruler from which period is addressed. The stated place of origin is the town of Banjarmasin, where since the Banjarmasin war of 1859-1864 Dutch rule had been firmly established. However, the weapon is also referred to as "toembak djangat." With *tombak* as the Malay word for "spear" the meaning of the word "djangat" is unclear. The inventory card refers to a Dayak-German

¹⁷ Ibidem, nr. 36: "Afkomstig van den opstandeling Pembakoel Kendit"; Sjamsuddin, "Fighting Dutch Rule", 47-48.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ In Christan's handwritten notebook the weapon was called "belajoeng lamah": NL-LdnRMV, serie-archief 761, "Etnographische verzameling," no. 105. The Dutch sources are insecure about the meaning of 'belajoeng'.

²⁰ Ian Black, "The 'Lastposten': Eastern Kalimantan and the Dutch in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16-2 (1 September 1985), 281-291.

²¹ "Beschrijving van de...", p. 6: "Waardigheidsteeken van een vorst"; NL-LdnRMV, serie-archief 761, "Etnographische verzameling," nr. 114.

dictionary, where *djangat* is described as a device to prepare rattan wood for wickerwork.²² The Dutch colonial administrator and ethnographer Jacob Mallinckrodt described a “toembak tjangga,” a trident spear used as a dignitary symbol by the leader of a Ngaju-Dayak community in the Arut river basin of Central Kalimantan.²³ Historian Mansyur Sammy points out that the Sultanate of Sambas in West Kalimantan holds a “tombak canggah” as one of its heirlooms, while a two-pointed spear called “tombak canga” is among the pusaka of the principedom of Kotawaringin in Central Kalimantan.²⁴ If the “toembak djangat” is indeed a Dayak weapon, *vorst* may refer to the descendants of the Antasari and Surapati families who claimed sovereignty after the formal abolition of the Banjarese Sultanate and continued their resistance against Dutch rule. One of them was Sultan Muhammad Seman, of Banjarese and Murung-Dayak descent, against whom Christan was deployed.

Suggestions for further research

An object analysis of the two weapons, along with the entire weapon collection to which they belong, by weapons experts from Kalimantan may reveal patterns and clusters of regional origin. This may also yield insights into the cultural usage and spiritual connotations of these weapons.

insights into the cultural usage and spiritual connotations of these weapons.

²² August Hardeland, *Dajacksch-deutsches Wörterbuch*, (Amsterdam: Frederik Muller 1859) p. 101. This dictionary describes in fact the Ngaju language.

²³ J. Mallinckrodt, "Ethnografische mededeelingen over de Dajaks in de afdeeling Koealapakoeas (Res. Zuider- En Oosterafd. Van Borneo)," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 80-2 (1924), pp. 397-446, there p. 441.

²⁴ Email from Sammy Mansyur, expert of Banjarese history and culture, 22 June 2021.