

Kris Handle in the Form of a Demonic Guardian

Bali, 18th century
Ivory

✓ Gift of John Young, 1991
(6743.1)

✓ **Kris Handles**

Various locations, 19th-20th century
Ivory, wood, bone

Gift of Howard A. and Estelle Bern, 1999
(9141.1 - 9153.1-.4)

The kris is a magical dagger from Indonesia that served both as a protective weapon and as an amulet. In creating a kris, considerable work is done by the craftsmen in deciding how the position, status, and personality of the owner-to-be will shape and decorate the kris. The variety of decoration varies widely throughout the archipelago and the handles take a large range of shapes, including animals, guardian figures, and flowers. It is believed that the kris possesses a powerful magical potency that can assist the owner in every kind of event and activity, with its many powers ranging from keeping disease away to preventing arguments, bringing victory in battle to extinguishing fires. The spirit of the kris is a loyal and inseparable companion to its owner. In Java, it is even claimed that there are only five things a man needed in order to be fulfilled: a wife, a horse, a home, a couple of birds, and a kris. The kris is still a part of Indonesian society today, worn by males in ceremonial events, particularly in weddings.