

M'ranao Traditional Tools

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Before tools were invented and manufactured by men, some parts of the human body were used by man as tools. Teeth, nails and fists, for instance, were used by man as weapons to protect himself. However, having a superior mind, man subsequently began to think out and develop tools apart from his own natural body parts.

Fossil finds of the Australopithecine hominid recovered from different archaeological sites in Asia and Africa reveal that, as early as the Pleistocene epoch, humanoids used tools for their quest of food and to protect themselves from harm. Studies in the evolution of the Paleolithic to Neolithic ages give us an insight on the development of stone tools from the hand axe to the javelin and arrow. Hoebel (1958) stated that "A prevalence of flint arrowheads throughout all Neolithic deposits, except for those of the Lower Neolithic in the Balkans and parts of the Near East, attested to wide use of the bow and arrow for both hunt and war."

The Bronze and Iron ages marked the development of various tools. Hoebel affirms that during these periods, long swords grew out of the chipped-stone dagger. In the early Bronze age, these sword weapons were of the poniard type, suitable for punching puncture wounds into an adversary. In the Bronze age, broad swords with double edges for two-way hacking were perfected, suitable for slashing down an opponent.

Besides the above archaeological evidences on the existence and development of primitive tools, ethnographic records also show the continuity of the making and use of weapons. According to Robinson (1961), Japan started manufacturing sword blades as early as the 8th century (701-704) during the Taiho period. Java is believed to have manufacture kris weapons during the Saka era date 1264 (Solyom, 1978). Gardner (1973) posits that the first damascene Malay kris were made during the reign of the second prince of Majapajit, circa 1300. From these documents, it is safe to say that the history of tools is tied up with the history of man from the prehistoric past to the present historic era. Pant (1970) characterizes the story of weapons as the history of humanity. He says: "Weapons are prerequisite for warfare and conquest and consequently are responsible for changing the face of the world."

It is a fact that man is never satisfied with what he is. He has that peculiarity over and above all living creatures that make him create and develop weapons, from the hand axe to the nuclear bomb. With the introduction of modern and sophisticated arms, primitive weapons were discarded for warfare use as these had no match against the high powered gun. Nevertheless some of these were salvaged by museums and antique collectors. The historical and cultural values were painstakingly documented and recorded by scholars and museum workers. As Pant (1970) has remarked, the swords preserved in the different museums and private collections present before us a saga of the chivalrous deeds of heroes who probably sacrificed their lives in defending their motherland against the onslaught of the enemy.

Cultural values of weapons could be linked with its various functions. The Malays, for instance, considered the kris or dagger as an accessory of their costumes. As one author says (Asia Magazine, 1968),

“Without a weapon... the Malays would feel like people going out naked.” Solyom (1978) stated that the kris served not simply as a weapon but more as an affirmation of Javanese identity of the mature man who is a responsible member of his family and community.

Considering the cultural values attached to the subject study and its probable disappearance very soon from the community, a preliminary study such as the present is called for. The writer, after many years of looking at artifacts inside the Aga Khan Museum, where he works, has decided to write this brief article with the hope that incoming generations will someday be interested in conducting an in-depth study on the present subject.

The Blacksmith Foundry

It is difficult to trace the origin of M'ranao blacksmithing technology due to lack of written records. Although some materials indicate that ancient Filipinos have been using metals between 800 and 250 BC, replacing the stone age, it is difficult to ascertain whether the present M'ranaos or their ancestors were among these said “Filipinos.” Fortunately, there are still surviving smiths with crafts probably belonging to old ages who were kind enough to give information on this matter.

They claim that use of metals have been practiced by their ancestors even before the coming of Islam to the Philippines. They also pointed out that even during the time of Prince Bantogen, hero of the M'ranao epic “Darangen,” people have been using metal weapons such as the *kampilan*, which were obviously manufactured by them.

Another big problem to determine is the source of raw materials, specifically iron ore. Some informants say that iron ore comes from the outer islands (*sangin ragat*) from Mindanao, which could mean neighboring countries. At any rate, such technology has obviously contributed to the development of food production, indirectly. Farming, fishing, and hunting implements were manufactured. Bladed weapons, household and farm tools were likewise produced. Talents and skills of

traditional artisans towards the field of arts and crafts industry were improved and preserved even to the present.

Among the M'ranao, the blacksmith complex is composed of four parts, namely: the shelter (*balaybalay*), the bellows (*tatapan*), the forge (*bantolang*) and the anvil (*randasan*). (Fig. 1)

The shelter is made of local light materials, such as bamboo, rattan, lumber, cogon grass for roofing, etc. It is erected within the premises of the house of the blacksmith. Usually the shelter has no complete wall in order to allow fresh air to circulate well in time of work.

The bellows is made of two big cylindrical bamboo tubes about five feet long. The upper and lower rims are fixed with board and tied together to ensure stability. Some artisan make it artistic by using decorative designs on its rims tied with rattan or nito. About four inches from the bottom, two small cylindrical tubes are provided where air passes through to blow on the fire. A stand is built at the back of the bellows for workers to stand or sit on. Also, it is used to hold the bellows firmly.

The forge is made up of clay piles or is a shallow pit dug in the ground. Bamboo or wood charcoal is used for firing.

The anvil, made of heavy steel, is placed near the forge in order to allow the worker easy access from the forge when he is to hammer the iron, while red-hot, on the anvil. By the anvil is a special piece of bamboo containing water for cooling and tempering the iron in the process of shaping and hammering.

Other blacksmith tools and materials are the following:

Robak (sledge), *bakbak* (hammer), *sipit* (tongs), *garogadi* (file), *panasang* (chisel), *kemo* (pliers), *basolan* (clamp), *kaban* (wooden charcoal container), *koso* (drill), *gabas* (saw), *kamanga* (grindstone), *palongan* (piece of bamboo for cooling) and *sinsil* (stripper). (Figs. 2

and 2a)

The sledge is really a heavy hammer made of hard iron with a hard wooden handle. The length of the handle depends upon the weight and the size of the iron head. Workers are skilled in making the proper balancing of the head and the handle. This balance enables easy manipulation of the tools. Such kind of tool is designed for hammering and flattening steel bar.

There are various sizes of hammers, large, medium and small. They are used to shape and form objects corresponding to desired sizes. These tools are made by the smiths themselves and are designed to fit their technology. The blacksmith hammer has a heavy head without the claw. It is made from high quality steel.

Tongs are likewise manufactured in various sizes, long-handled in order to hold the object during its hammering.

The rest of the tools are used in accordance with their respective functions. The file, for instance, is for removing gouge marks and final shaping; *sinsil* is used to cut, grove and split steel or iron.

The Process

1. *Landiawan* (model). A wood pattern of the object to be made is prepared.

2. *Kaiyao* (firing/heating). The steel or iron piece is placed in the furnace until red-hot. One worker takes care of pumping the bellows and another watches the furnace to regulate the heat through the quantity of fuel.

3. *Karobak* (hammering). The heated piece of metal is hammered with the sledge (*robak*) for flattening and elongating into the desired shape and size. The process is repeated until the approximate size and shape is achieved.

4. *Katebal* (shaping). When the steel or iron has the approximate thickness, width and length, it is shaped more closely with the *sinsil*. One worker holds the object with the tongs and another shapes it with the *sinsil* and hammer.

5. *Kakara* (laminating pattern of the blade). It is the process of mixing a special kind of steel or nickelous iron into the blade for sharpness. Two methods are used: the *kalokop* and *kabombor*. In the *kalokop* method, the shaped object is split into halves and steel or nickelous iron is placed in between. *Kabombor* is the process of cutting the steel or nickelous iron into tiny pieces and forge-welded on the surface.

6. *Kabatak* (forging). This is the process of heating and hammering the metal object until the laminating materials is completely forged with the iron.

7. *Kapipik* or *kaimpit* (forming). The object is heated lightly and hammered to exact form.

8. *Kasebo* (tampering). The object is tempered to the desired softness or sharpness.

9. *Kakamanga* (sharpening). The tool or weapon is sharpened on a grindstone.

Classification

M'ranao tools may be classified into five, namely: tools for warfare (weapons), fishing and hunting, farming, carpentry, and simple cutting. Despite the introduction of modern tools, the M'ranao still keep and use some of the traditional ones as they are easier to handle, and are less expensive.

For Warfare

Hostility, conflict and antagonism among human beings are natural phenomena, thus every individual, tribal group and/or nation prepares for defense through the use of various weapons against any adversary.

Keeping heirlooms of any material trait or artifact is a customary practice among the M'ranos. Weapon such as the *sondang* (kris), *kampilan* (sword) and *gonong* (dagger) are among their favorites. (Fig. 3) These can be observed in the Aga Khan Museum collection of artifacts. Almost all collected weapons were recorded as *pusaka* (heirloom) of an individual, family or clan. Thus these weapons signify historical and cultural values in M'ranos society.

Study of different component parts of the weapon is necessary because of their associated functional roles. The blade, for instance, cannot function effectively without the hilt. Likewise, the blade and handle cannot carry sufficient cultural and aesthetic value in the absence of its sheath. The three parts, therefore, should go hand-in-hand to complete the kris or dagger ensemble of which functional, cultural, social and historical meanings may be determined.

Generally, weapons are designed for warfare, as discussed earlier. They provide defense to the possessor against his enemies. However, as culture evolved, the technology of weapons has also improved and various beliefs cover it, that is, some religious and magical beliefs are attached to the use of weapons. The weapons of the most primitive people, for instance, do not hold any special meaning except that they are useful in combat. Later, the weapon of some successful warrior said to have supernatural powers is valued very much by the owner and is kept as heirloom by later generations of his family.

The transformation of a primitive society to a horticultural and agricultural society also made it possible for the development of arts and crafts. When this took place, weapons were decorated with various designs, to the extent of using precious jewelry, which in turn increased the social value and possibly also the function of the weapon. Along this

context, M'ranao society practices elaborate ceremonies like wedding, enthronement, welcoming of guests and relatives who have been out for sometime and rituals of various types. Special types of weapons may be required for the observance of such ceremonies and are classified as ceremonial weapons. Weapons handed to a crowned sultan or datu symbolize power, prestige and leadership. This type of weapon is kept by him as heirloom for later generations. In short, the total characteristic of a weapon, especially in its form and style, reveals its functional, cultural, social, political and historical significance in the society.

From the work of Gardner (1973), the writer noted that there are similarities between the M'ranao weapons and the Malay weapons. There is a great probability that some of the M'ranao weapons have originated from Malayan sources. The characteristics of the blade, hilt and sheath shows great similarities. Another probability of origin of the M'ranao weapon is Java. This can be seen in the work of Solyom (1978) on the Javanese *keris*. The blade, handle and the sheath of the kris were thoroughly studied by both authors. They start from the forging of the blade, including the beliefs and rituals involved, and they documented the whole process scientifically. The shape and form of the wavy blade is very identical to the M'ranao kris. Likewise, the dress or ornamented cover of the scabbard is closely related to the product of the M'ranao way of making sheaths. The above probable origins of or influences on the M'ranao weapons give a clearer classification of the weapons under study. (Figs. 4 and 5)

Moreover, Pant (1970) classified Indian weapons according to functions, as follows: weapons for slashing; weapons for thrusting; projectiles weapons; and weapons for smashing. Swords, dao, kirches, parasos and axes belong to the category of slashing weapons. Thrusting weapons, include daggers of different types. Javelins, barchas, arrows, and firearms belong to the projectile type. For smashing, the mace is one of the chief types of the group. Gardner (1973), for his part, classified the Malay kris according to places of origin, the pamor, the iron, the shape of the blade and the hilt. In the Philippines setting, Saber (1979) classified the M'ranao kris into ceremonial and killing types. A kris with highly ornamented hilt belongs to the former and all rest to the

later.

There are various characteristics of the weapons. Loehr (1956) characterized the shape of the dagger's blade as symmetrical and asymmetrical. The Javanese keris, according to Solyom (1978) shows various characteristics, which are found mainly on its shape, form and style of make. The carving of the handle depict various motifs, the use of the *selut* (metal ornament that encased the base of the handle), and the silver depict the indigenous M'ranao okir design which indicate royalty of the owner or the blade's decorative and/or ceremonial purposes.

The *Kampilan*

C.B. Gardner (1973) classified Malay swords into three main types: the *pedang*, the *golok*, and the *parang*. The *kampilan* appears to have been classified under the *golok* type. (Fig. 6a and b)

Varieties of the *golok* are: *golok jambu* or the *kelantan kelewang*, the Sulu *kelewang*, the *gedobang*, the *elanun kampilan*, the *kelewang_tebal hujung*, the *kelawing puchok berkait*, the *golok bangkong* or *golok perak*, the *tarah baju*, and the *beladan*. One of his plates, Figure 87, No. 6 labeled as *kelewang* has a blade and hilt similar to the *kampilan*. The *sulu kelewang*, according to his description, is a single edge sword that gets wider and heavier towards the point. The cutting edge is straight.

The *kampilan* is the longest M'ranao fighting blade. It is about 76 cms. long from hilt to the tip. It has a single cutting edge. The flat blade gradually gets broader from the guard towards to the tip. The two types of blade are the *kampilan a sosondian* and the *kampilan a tampad* or *daa son-di-ian*. The former has a protruding part above the tip (*sokot*) about an inch in length. This protrusion is intended to prevent the blade from cutting all the way through the body of the victim. Considering that the blade gets broader toward the tip and narrower down toward the guard, it is designed to be a broad sword that could cause a large wound or cut clean through a victim. In this regard; a suicidal enemy who is armed with a short weapon (say a dagger) may as a last breath effort, push himself forward into the *kampilan* imbedded in him to get at stabbing

distance of his opponent. Hence, the protrusion part at the tip, serving as a stopper.

The hilt is made to the likeness of swift's tail. It is made of a hard wood, sometime banded with rattan or metal wire for a better grip. Both hands (left and right) may be used by the holder for the chopping and thrusting movements. The guard (*ampa*) also made of wood, is fitted first, then the hilt, using a local resin to the tang. The borders are carved with okir design. The round carving in the center is called the eye (*matamata*). Just between the guard and the ferrule is a piece of cloth, usually red in color called *kolili*. It is used to tie over the hand for a strong and firmed grip.

The *kampilan* has no permanent sheath. At home, when not expected to be used, it is kept in a bamboo tube (*tentang*). When carried outdoors, it is wrapped in thin and soft wood (*bayog*) material called *parapan*, tied with various light strings, which corresponds to its sheath. This sort of outdoor sheath enables the holder to use the blade instantly without having to remove it from its sheath.

The *kampilan* is indigenous to the M'ranao. The folk legend of the M'ranao epic, the Darangen describes the origin and power of the *kampilan* in the following verse: "The *kampilan* neither forged by a smith, nor brought in by a trader, nor procured from foreign lands, but given by a spirit (*tonong*) to Tominaman sa Rogong, the Chief of Bembaran." It is believed that this weapon has supernatural powers. It could kill enemies by its being merely pointed at them during battle.

Some M'ranao believed that the existence of a supersteel (*dato a potao*) for any weapon. It has the power to protect the owner from harm during battle. The blade having *dato a potao* is seen by the enemy as blazing with fire. Thus, with it the owner is protected for attack.

The Kiping

The *kiping* is newly introduced to the M'ranao. (Fig. 7) It came from Sulu where it is called the *barong*. The *barong* is a leaf shaped blade, noted for its sharpness as it could cut through light firearms. The M'ranao copied the shape of the blade and hilt and called it *kiping*. It seems that the shape of the blade originated from the Malay *parang*, a type of Malay sword, as classified by C.B. Gardner (Fig. 62 No. 1 - Keris and Other Malay Weapons.) It is possibly an imitation from some Chinese blade.

The handle is provided with a long metal ferrule fitted to the tang. It is slightly curved. The sheath is made of wood, sometimes with carved designs. Because of its sharpness, the M'ranao often use it for slaughtering cattle.

The Bangkao

The M'ranao has two general classification of spears, according to the blade shape: the *bangkao* and the *sebat*. Both are used for thrusting and throwing. They are also used for hunting. The blade of the former is of two types: *kapelapalad* (broad blade) and *lawi a manok* (feather-like blade). The latter has a barbed blade. It is loosely fitted to the shaft. It has a hole in between the tang and blade in which a piece of string is attached. (Fig. 8)

The shaft is made of hard wood and/or *rogan* (palm tree wood). A ferrule made of metal or rattan is provided on the edge of the shaft to prevent splitting. It is fitted to the tang with resin. It has proper balancing for throwing or thrusting. Like any other weapon, the spear has its sheath.

For Fishing and Hunting

Fishing and hunting were once a favorite hobby and/or vocation of the M'ranos when the Lanao area was still a jungle. The lake and the forests had abundant endemic fish, birds, and game mammals. The natives had their own traditional fishing and hunting implements. Even today, the indigenous implements are still used. The existence of these implements is a part of their conscious preservation of their own culture.

Bladed fishing and hunting implements may be classified as follows: the throwing spears (*bangkao*, *sebat*, and *osod*), the *pana* or *tipara* (arrow gun), and cutlass (*tabas* or *sangket*). For the clearing and preparation of the site, for fishing and hunting, other bladed weapons may be used such as carpentry tools and farming implements, etc.

The Bangkao (Spear)

This type of weapon has been described under the fighting weapons. The same type is used both in fighting and in hunting wild animals.

The Sebat

This kind of spear is used for hunting and fishing. The blade is dual barbed. The barbs are intended to keep the blade on to its target. Also, a piece of string attached to a roll of the same string is attached to the spearhead to enable the fisherman control of the caught fish or animal. The spearhead is fitted loosely to the shaft to allow the latter to be removed easily. It is made of cylindrical wood (bamboo, etc.) or rogan (palm wood).

The Osod

The *osod* is a throwing spear with fork-like spikes. The center spike is double-barbed, the others have only one. The *osod* is used for fishing. Catches are mudfish, carp, and other larger freshwater fish. The spear head is also loosely fitted to the shaft, attached with a string of considerable length to allow the catch to move around until it loses strength. A fisherman using this kind of gear fishes from a banca in a moonless sight. One man takes care of the rowing while the spearman stands at the prow to watch for the fish and throw the spear. Before the introduction of the flashlight, the M'ranao used native kind of lighting (*solo a tigis*) or torch (*barabad*).

The Pana or Tipara

This is the speargun. The arrowhead has one to three points like the *osod*, each point having barbs. A string is also attached to the arrowhead. The shaft and the arrowhead is made from a steel bar or, now, light aluminum pipe from the TV antenna. Rubber is used to set and shoot the arrow. The front end of the gun is provided with the bamboo or cylindrical metal tube through which the arrow shot passes through. The trigger of the first invented *pana* was on top of the handle; later it was made similar to that of the rifle. This type of fishing gear could be used both underwater and from the surface on a banca. Before the introduction of the rubber, the bow and arrow was used for fishing and hunting.

For Farming

Farming and fishing are main livelihood of the M'ranos. They enjoyed such vocation with the use of their traditional implements. These implements are: the *tabas*, *sangket*, *balingkong*, *garab*, *parang* and *pangbar*.

The Tabas

The *tabas* is a long-bladed cutlass. The blade is curved upward about 48 cms. long. It has a long handle with five or more metal ferrules. In the absence of metal, rattan is used for tying the handle to fit in the tang. The handle is longer than the blade and usually made of bamboo. This type is often used in lowland farming. It serves very well in clearing the ricefield dike (*kapangophay*). The handle is almost cylindrical in form to allow the blade to be swung to left and right in cutting grass. It could be very effective for combat, too. (Fig. 9)

The Sangket

It is another type of cutlass. The blade is forged to get broader toward the end and is heavy and slightly bent. The blade is similar to the *latok buku* of the Borneo Malays. The handle is made like that of the *tabas*. It is used both in upland and lowland farming. Also, it is an effective combat weapon. The *sangket* came ahead of the *tabas*. The handle is longer than the blade. Both hands are used holding this tool to cut grass, swinging it to left and right.

The Balingkong

The *balingkong* is an inwardly curved bladed cutlass. It is a new form among the Maranao and is possibly imitated from a nearby neighborhood. It has a relatively short blade. It is both used on upland and lowland farming. It is very effective for cutting dense or thick grass in one direction; the cutting edge is in the inward side of the blade's curve. The handle is as long as the handle of the *tabas* and *sangket*. The worker has to bend his back slightly in order not to cause much fatigue to himself.

The Garab

The *garab* is a palay harvesting knife. The blade edge is sharpened like that of the saw. The back edge is curved like the *nawi*. The left hand would hold as many stalks of palay as possible then the reaper would pull the *garab* outward to the right. The handle is short, fitted to the tang with a metal ferrule to prevent splitting. It is made from a hard bent branch of wood to suit the grasp better. It is used both in upland and lowland farming.

The Parang

There are three types of the *parang*, the ordinary, the *salacop* and the *barira*. The cutting edge of the ordinary *parang* is on the broader end at the blade. The handle is made from curved wood branch, usually of guava, orange, jackfruit, or some other tree. Two ferrules are provided to hold the tang firmly in place. The *salacop* type has a double-edged blade in addition to the cutting edge at its broad end. It can be used for chopping and thrusting, for weeding the grass, tilling the soil, digging a hole, and pulverizing soil. The *barira* type is made in a community name Barira. It is famous for its sharpness because of the good quality steel used. The community is located in northern part of Lanao near the Municipality of Malabang. In view of its accessibility to the coastal area, good quality of steel or iron could be easily secured by smiths forging it. The blade is polished and shiny and soil does not stick on it for long.

The Pangbar

The *pangbar* is used to till soil. The shape of the blade is like that of the *parang*. It is broadened to the end, and slightly longer than the *parang*. The tang is fitted to a wood hook-like handle and tied with rattan (*kabalo*). It is used in slash and burn farming.

For Carpentry

Despite their crude carpentry tools, the M'ranos are able to produce other artistic and impressive looking tools. These are the *badi*, *nawi*, *mandao*, and *pangawak*. These knives vary in sizes, shapes, forms and functions.

The Badi

There are two types of *badi*, the big one designed for chopping (*kambasai*) and cutting logs. The standard size is used in the carpentry work. The *badi* has almost the same blade shape and form as the *tabas*. It is curved outward with the cutting edge on the outside of the curve. It has the thickest blade among carpentry tools. The bamboo handle is made proportionate to the blade for proper balancing. It is fitted to the tang usually with five ferrules. It is also used in slash and burn farming. (Fig. 10)

The Mandao

The *mandao* is a leaf-shaped blade carpentry tool. It has an elongated and sharp point. Its blade is narrower than the *badi*'s. The handle is made of bamboo with a metal or rattan ferrule. The *mandao* is used for light carpentry or for finishing touch work. This type of bolo is very common among the M'ranos, considering its versatility and its ideal size and weight. The measurement of the blade is about 38 cms. long and 47 cms. wide.

The Nawi

The *nawi* has a unique blade shape. It has a straight back edge. The blade edge is curved and the end is very sharp and pointed, used to bore holes. The size of the tool varies depending upon the needs of the owner. Usually, a stout and strong person would want to have a larger

nawi. The wooden handle is often short, the tool being designed for one-hand use. It is used in light carpentry work, especially in bamboo and rattan crafts. It is provided with a sheath, which the owner tucks on his side during farming, fishing, hunting etc. Its measurement is about 36 cms. long and 5 cms. wide. (Fig. 11)

The Pangawak

The *pangawak* is really a small *nawi* with a long tang fitted to the handle. It is used to plane or clean wood. Also, an essential for carving.

Carving Tools

The following are the carving tools of the M'ranas: *pangawak* or *panasap*, *sakal*, *soloso*, *panowat*, and *panasang*. These tools are made in a set of various sizes to suit the object to be carved. (Fig. 12)

The *pangawak* or *panasap* is a small *nawi*-shaped blade used to smooth the wood. It is used instead of a plane. It has a long tang fitted on to the handle.

The *sakal* is a small hoe-like blade fitted to a wood handle. It is used for dug-out carving, especially for boat making.

The *saloso* has a concave blade and is used for grooving.

The *panowat* is a small knife with a broad blade used for intricate carving. It is used to remove chips after the use of the *pangawak*.

The *panasang* is really just the common wood chisel.

Knives

While the M'ranao men have their own tools for various purposes, M'ranao women, likewise, have their own purposely for home use. These tools are generally termed *gelat* (knife). They are classified according to shape or form of blade, corresponding to function. Their classification names are as follows: *miandamandao*, *inonai*, *piaramingko*, *labasa*, *pangbo*, *gepes*, *salacop*, *piaramparang*, and *pangipas*.

The *miandamandao* is a knife with the *mandao* blade shape, thin, light, small, and not too pointed. It is used for cleaning skinning, and slicing large fish species, like carp (*bongkaong*), mudfish, etc. The *inonai* may be shaped straight or curved, as the *miandamandao*. The handle is forged with the blade. Its utility is the same as the *miandamandao*'s. The *piaramingko* blade is curved, its end point rolled over the blade. Its uniqueness is that it belongs with royalty, owned by a *bai*. The *labasa* has a straight blade and is used both in the kitchen and in weaving craft. The *pangbo* is a small knife used to remove the intestine of small fish. The *gepes* is used to trim the excess thread in cloth or in mat weaving. It is also used for cutting betel nut into pieces (*pangipas*). The *piaramparang* has a broad blade used for slicing meat, fish and vegetables. Its shape is like that of *parang*, the farming tool.

Rituals and Beliefs

It is a traditional belief among M'ranaos that Prophet Ibrahim was the first human being to engage in gold and silver smithing. He became famous for his fine works. Since his time, it became a traditional practice among the M'ranaos to render ritual ceremony, *karalat*, Arabic term for a prayer, for the smithy.

A *towan* or a group of *towan* (devoted religious man) is called to perform the prayer with the preparation of colored rice (*kioning*) and chicken placed on the food tray (*tabak*). They pray to Allah for the blessing of the foundry; that the maker or owner be graced by God with the same talent and skill as Prophet Ibrahim's; that the produce be sold

in good price, and that in the process of the blacksmith's pursuit he and his family be given more wealth and happiness.

Another belief is about the two ways of forging superior weapons and tools, *kanjamaat* (every Friday) and *kapemoharam* (every first month of the Arabic calendar year). To the M'ranos, weapons made on Fridays are considered to have supernatural power, hence they are kept as heirloom. But even superior to it is that one made during the Fridays of *Moharam*. The difficulty in the making of the Moharam weapons is that if it is unfinished at the Last Friday of said month, it must be kept until the same month of the following year. Friday, a Muslim holy day of the week, bears cultural significance.

Superstitious Beliefs

Luck testing of bladed weapons. There are various beliefs in testing the luck of bladed weapons (e.g. the kris, kampilan, dagger, etc.). The possessor of the weapon must be sure of its good luck, as it is believed that some weapons could cause the death of the owner, or that there are types of weapons that are afraid of bloodshed. Some examples of luck testing are given as follows:

1. "Measuring" with the thumb: First Procedure. The kris or any other bladed weapon is tested by using the thumbs in the following manner: Starting from the guard, the right thumb layed on the blade, followed by left thumb and then again the right thumb and so on. Each time the thumb is placed to measure the blade, a corresponding phrase is represented, as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| a. first right thumb | - "Isa so Allah" (God is one) |
| b. first left thumb | - "Ika dowa Mohammad" (Second is Mohammad) |
| c. second right thumb | - "Ika telo kapatay" (third is death) |
| d. second left thumb | - "Ika pat mabinasa" (fourth is destroyed) |
| e. third right thumb | - "Ika lima kawasa" (fifth is wealth) |

After the third right thumb of the sequence, the count begins again with the phrase used with the first right thumb and so on.

If the fifth phrase “Ika lima kawasa” ends at the tip, it is believed that said weapon possesses mighty luck.

B. “Measuring” with the thumb: Second Procedure: Again the right thumb is first layed on the blade followed by the left. Somewhat different from the first procedure, the phrases used are:

- a. “Mboat Ta” (we rise) for the first count (right thumb)
- b. “Pranta” (we fight) for the second (left)
- c. “Miga ta” (we lie down) for the third (right)
- d. “Mataita” (we die) for the fourth (left)

The first phase is believed to have a good luck if it ends at the tip of the blade of the weapon.

C. “Measuring” with the thumb: Third Procedure. Another test by use of the thumb includes use of two words, *Bismillah* and *Illallah*. The former is the first word of the starting phrase of the Holy Kor’an and the latter refers to Allah (God). Bismillah signifies good luck as it indicates the beginning or the “go signal.” The latter signifies death for the reason that Muslim who is dying is guided by a learned Olama who whispers in his ear the name of Allah or Illallah, or the right path to Allah. Another interpretation is that all creatures will return to Him, the Creator.

D. “Measuring” with the Palm. Starting from the blade’s tip, the owner gets a grip of the blade, while its hilt points down. If he can do so, that serves as the first part of the measurement. The blade is turned over his hand until it rest on the back of his hand and its hilt is pointed up. That constitutes the second part of the measurement. The blade is turned again until it can be gripped again by his hand, this time with the hilt pointing down again. This is the third part of the measurement, which is made to continue in the same procedure until the handle is reached.

If in the end, the hand gets a proper grip on the handle without any of its part protruding, that could indicate good luck. Otherwise, if the back of the hand falls on the handle, the weapon is totally bad. If there is little part for gripping achieved in the end, the weapon is not effective for combat.

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Blacksmith Complex



Figure 1

Foundry Tools

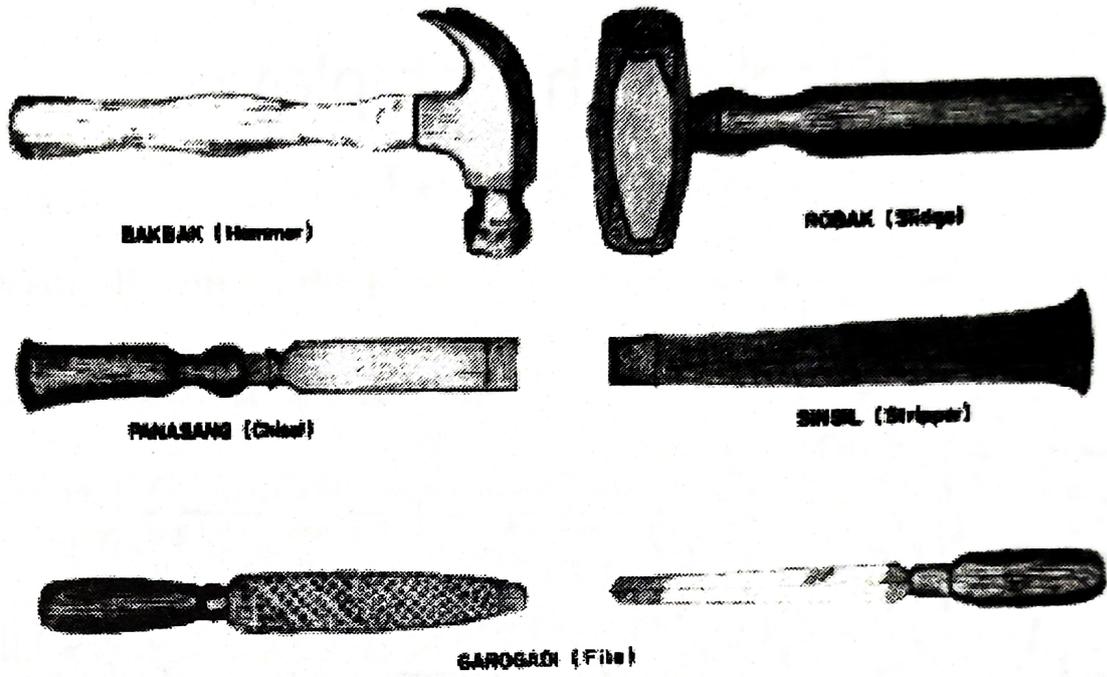


Figure 2

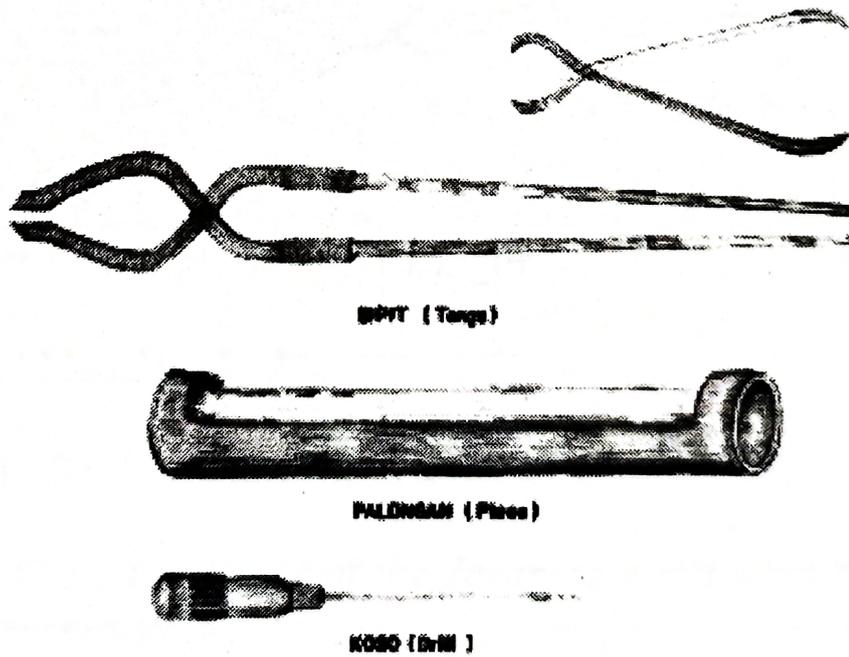


Figure 2a

Gonong (Dagger)

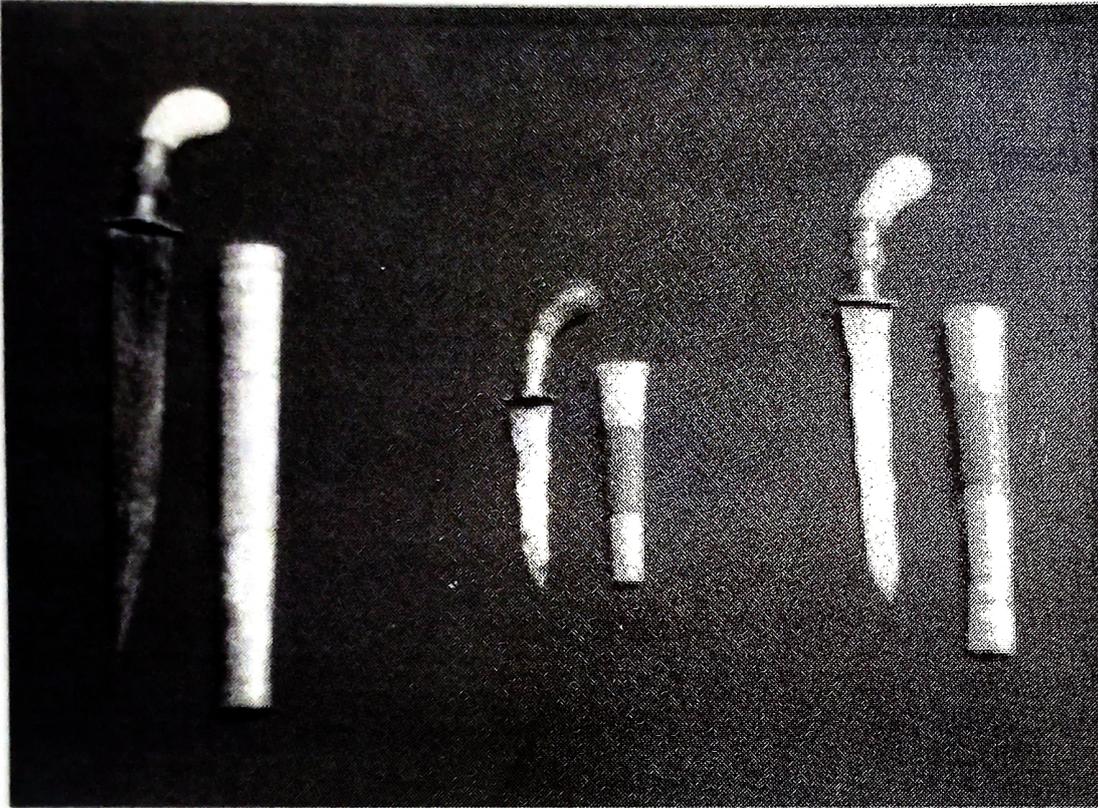


Figure 3

PARTS OF A KRIS BLADE

Titing (Tang) _____

Sampir (Guard) _____

Baka bako _____

Tikeg (Center rib) _____

Siko (Wavy edge) _____

Gorongon (Cutting edge) _____

Sokot (Point) _____

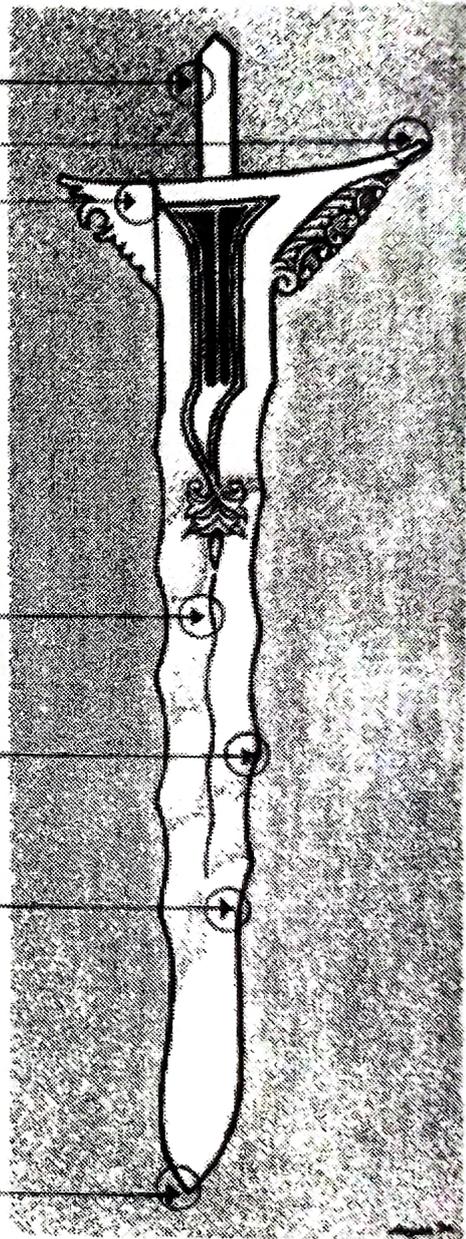


Figure 4

Sondang (Kris)



Figure 5

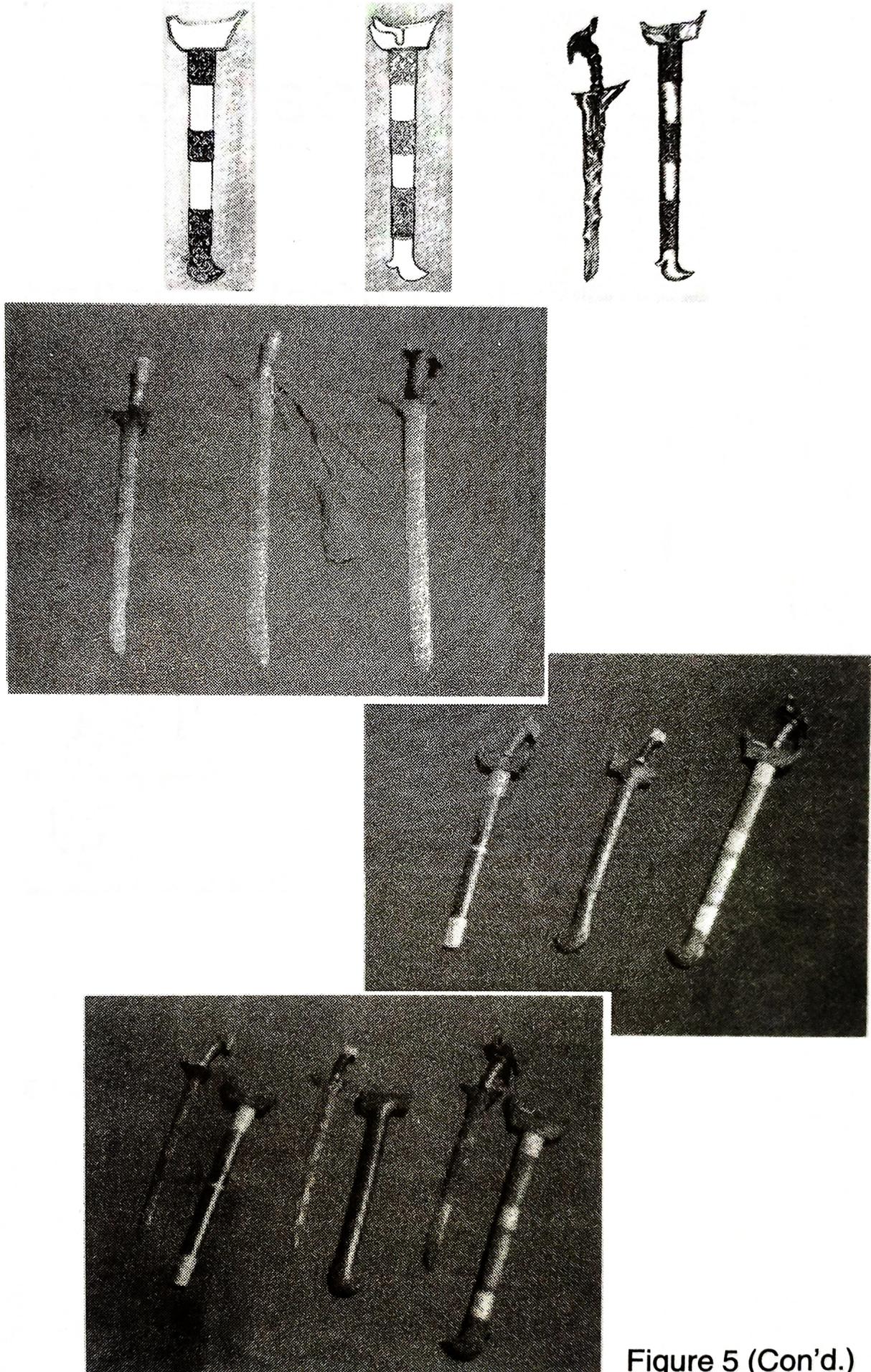


Figure 5 (Con'd.)

Kampilan (Sword)

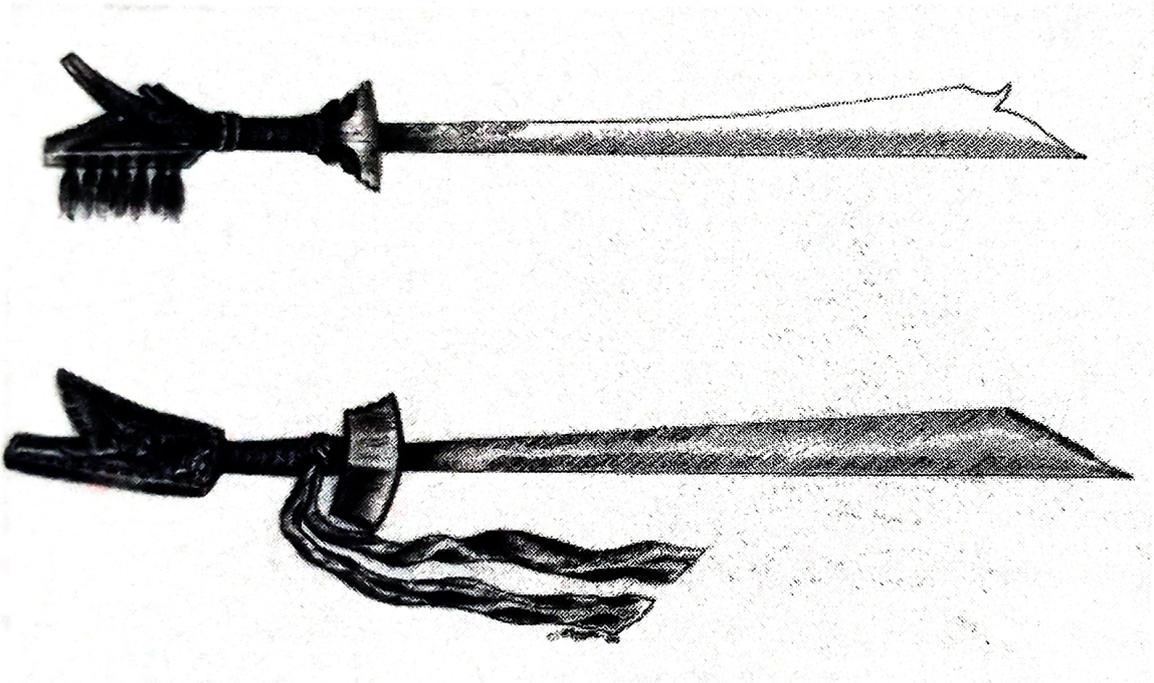


Figure 6a

Kampilan (Sword)

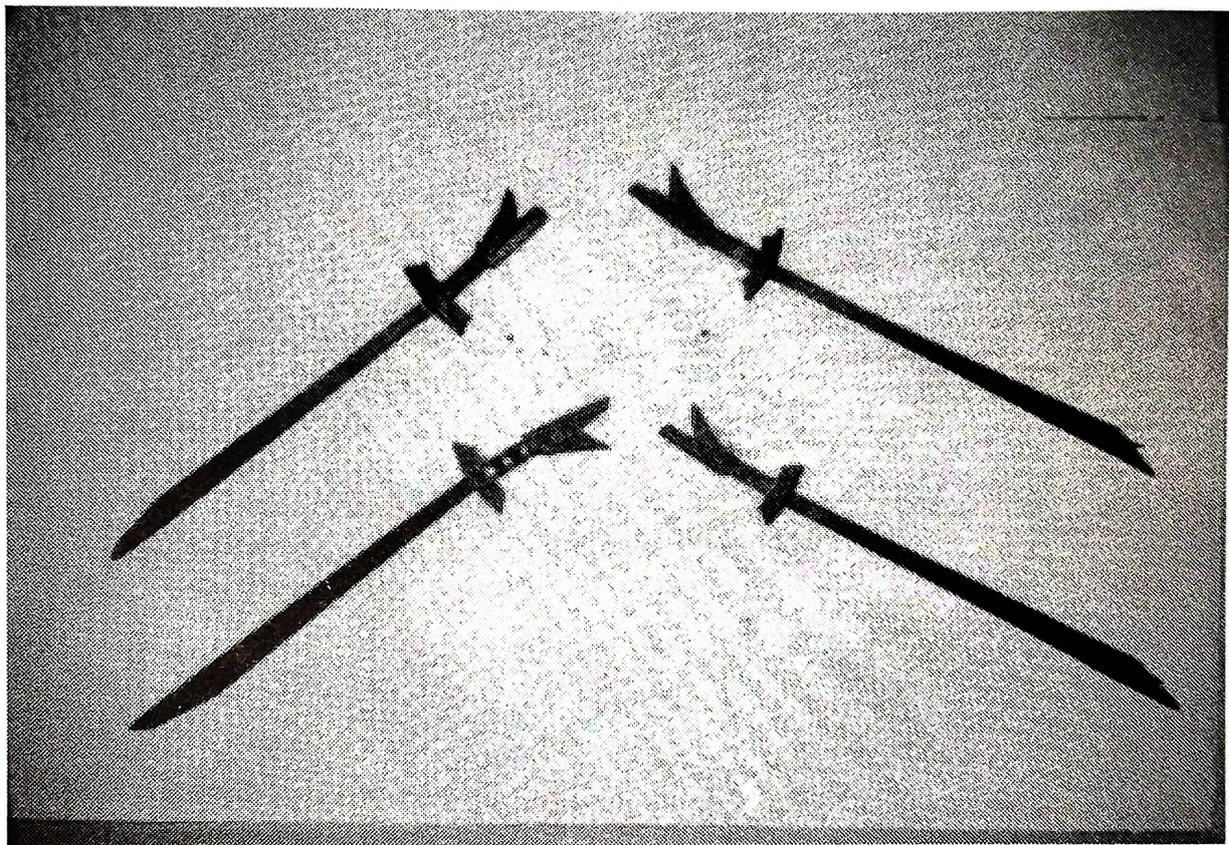


Figure 6b

Kiping

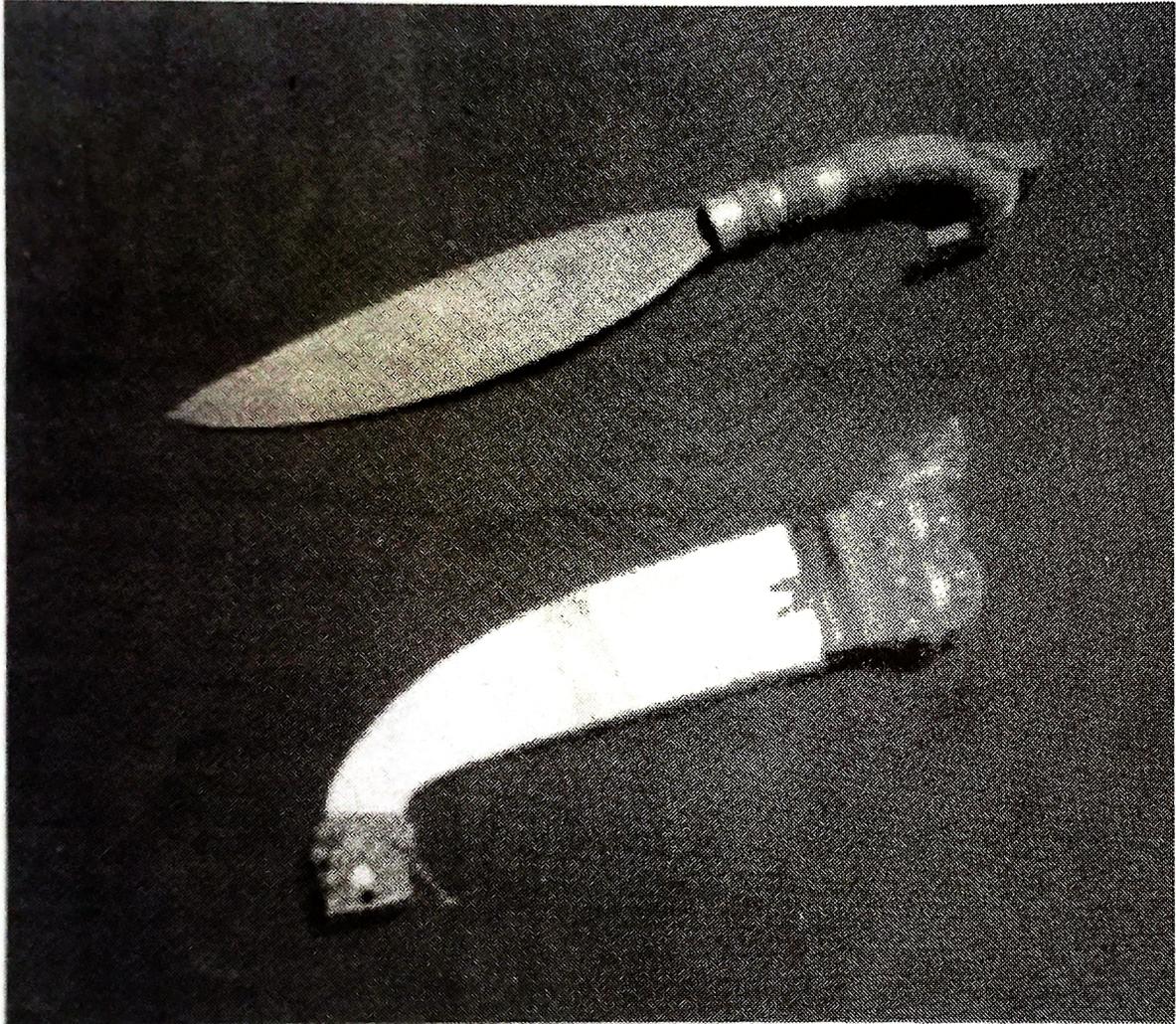


Figure 7

Bangkao

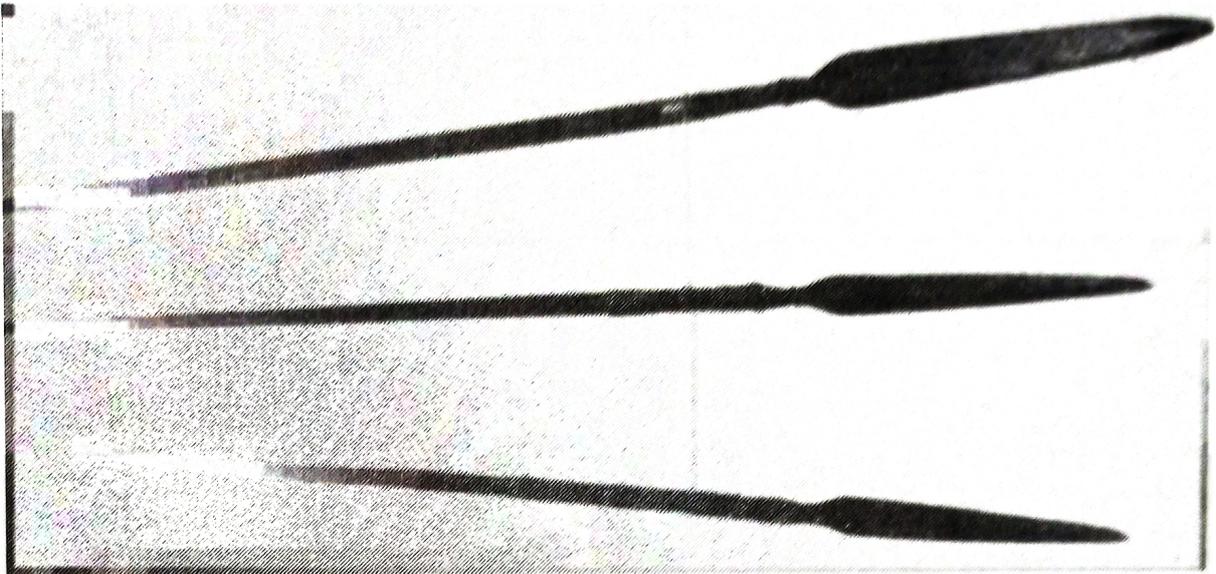


Figure 8

Tabas

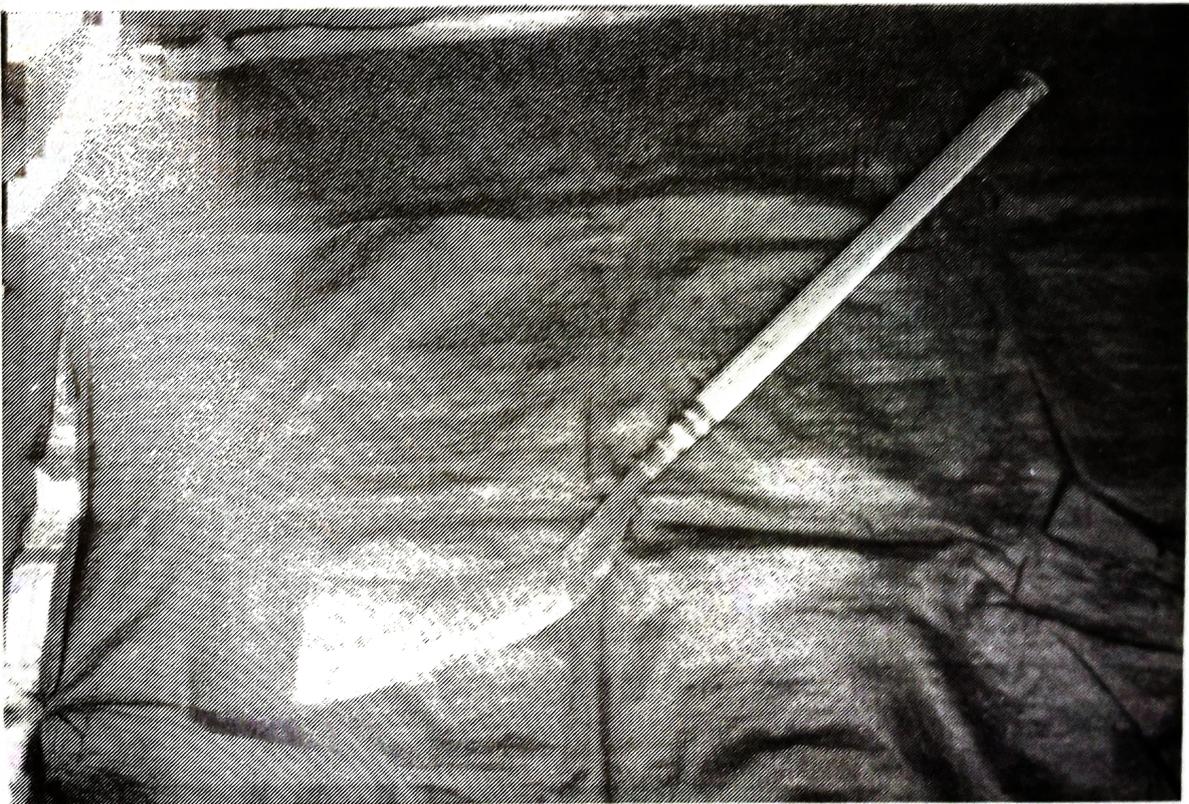


Figure 9

Badi



Figure 10

Nawi



Figure 11

CARVING TOOLS

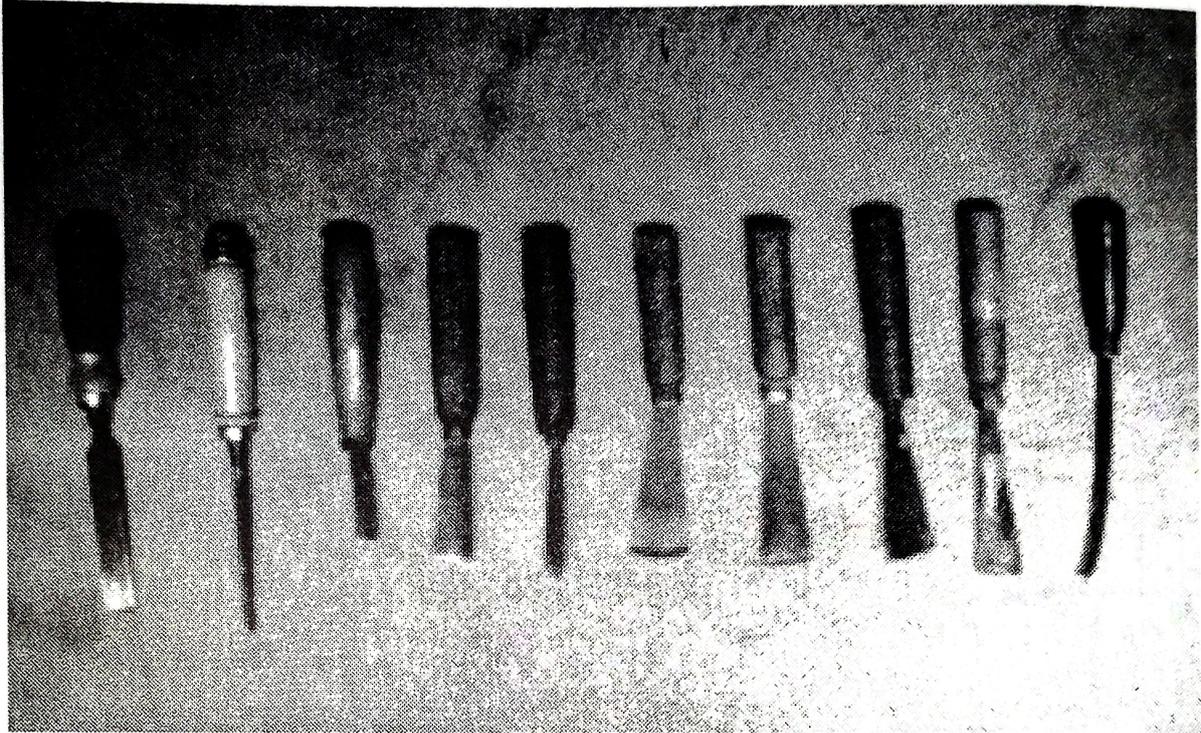


Figure 12