

SOME EDGE WEAPONS
WITH SELDOM ENCOUNTERED
WOOTZ BLADES



Rick Stroud Collection

INTRODUCTION

Over the years I have been fortunate to acquire some unusual and sometimes rare edge weapons. While my collecting interests are fairly diverse I have always been attracted to swords with patterned blades whether it is wootz, nice pattern weld, pamor, layered, etc.

This pamphlet represents a small selection of edge weapons which typically do not sport wootz blades. As this was done for a table presentation for the ethnographic sword forum the photographs are mine and one can immediately notice I am not a professional. Hopefully, though, I was able to capture a good overall image of the sword and more importantly, a good shot of the wootz.

I made this for those in attendance so that they have a small reference of edge weapons with seldom encountered wootz blades and hopefully more interesting examples will surface to add to this small sample. I also made this in a format that could be shared on the ethnographic forum for those that could not attend the seminar.



AN INDIAN TEGHA
OF IMPRESSIVE
PROPORTIONS
INDIA, 17TH OR
18TH CENTURY

This is an interesting tegha in that the blade is mostly forged of wootz steel which is no small task given the size of the blade. There is a noticeable scarf weld about 3" ahead of the guard in which the wootz billet was welded to the plain steel portion of blade and tang. The majority of true tegha I have encountered sport either plain steel blades, plain steel blades with faux Damascus or acid etched pattern, or are pattern welded. I am sure there are other tegha out there with wootz blades but they seem few and far between. This is the first example I have encountered in my collecting days.



The wootz pattern is consistent throughout, of decent activity, with a bold darkened zone along the edge which indicates the area was differentially heat treated. It is in this heat treated area the pattern is the most bold. The pattern is more "loose" than your typical Indian crystalline Damascus which exhibits a very tight grain.



OMANI KATTARA
OMAN, 19TH
CENTURY

This is a rather plain looking Omani Kattara which makes the fact it is sporting a wootz blade even more interesting. The majority of kattara I have encountered have long, thin, very flexible double edged blades with rounded points and often are seen with the Passau or running wolf mark. Most are thought to be mounted with old European blades of the 17th and 18th century. This example has the same, typical thin double edged blade, but lacks any markings and the tip is more angular than often found. It could be that many Omani swords are out of polish or because so many have the European imported blades that one is not looking for wootz so this may be why so few have turned up. This is the first example with this hilt type I have seen with a wootz blade.



The pattern is consistent throughout with decent activity and medium contrast. The pattern is somewhat unique as it does not fall into the typical categories of sham, Indian crystalline Damascus or Persian Damascus. Perhaps this is a survival of Arab wootz making tradition that is thought to have died out in the late middle ages.



RUSSIAN KINDJAL
WITH PERSIAN
WOOTZ BLADE
MOUNTS RUSSIAN
LATE 19TH CENTURY
BLADE PERSIAN
18TH/19TH
CENTURY

Russian military mounted kindjal very seldom are found with wootz blades. Persian Qama, which are kindjal looking, are found with wootz blades in larger quantities. This one is interesting because it appears to be a Persian made blade with post-forging Russian chiseling and mounted in typical late 19th century Russian military kindjal mounts. With the rather plain mounts, it is possible it is an earlier blade that was remounted later in life. With the Russian chiseling, it could be easy to mistake this blade for Russian wootz, which is quite scarce. However, upon close inspection of the quality of the wootz on this example, I suspect it is Persian made and then altered in the Russian market of the 19th century. In any case, it makes for an interesting Russian kindjal and very few sport wootz blades.

The pattern is bold, consistent and has high contrast and clarity. All indications of Persian wootz. The chiseling, of very high quality, is most probably Russian done and post forging.





INDIAN KUKRI
WITH RARE DOUBLE
HANDLED ELEPHANT
IVORY GRIP
INDIA, 18TH/19TH
CENTURY

This is a lovely kukri with many interesting and unique features. The first, of course, is that it has a wootz blade. The grip is unusual in that it is a double handle and nicely carved from elephant ivory. The bolster is covered in koftgari. The blade has an elegant curvature to it, not unlike the Indian Sossun Pata. Kukri with wootz blades are quite scarce. The examples found to date, and there are not that many, tend to be Indian made. The large quantity of out of polish kukri helps to hide whether or not other examples exist but there are many Nepalese made examples with rather fine pattern welds. It is unknown if wootz was worked in Nepal but it is unlikely.



The pattern is consistent and has a tight grain to it like many Indian crystalline Damascus. The steel is a light grey so the contrast is rather fine, like the hada on a Japanese sword but in good light it is quite visible and prominent.



ARAB JAMBIYA
MECCA, 19TH
CENTURY

The majority of Arab style jambiya I have come across in my collecting days are forged of plain steel. This is the first example I have encountered with a wootz blade. With so many examples being made of plain steel it is quite possible other examples are out there, in poor polish, that also have wootz blades but for true Arab style jambiya I have yet to see another example. The blade on this example is made in the typical Arab style with high midrib and thickened point.



The pattern on this blade is bold, of high contrast and very good activity. One would associate this with Persian wootz. The question rises then; is it an imported Persian wootz blade or an Arab made one? I would suggest it is a custom ordered piece, made by a Persian smith, for the Arab market in the Arab style, but of nice Persian wootz.



PISO PODANG WITH
PERSIAN WOOTZ
BLADE
BATAK MOUNTS
19TH CENTURY
PERSIAN BLADE 19TH
CENTURY

The Piso Podang of Sumatra has a hilt form descended from Indian tulwar hilts of the 15th/16th century. As Sumatra was an important trade route, you often find Piso Podang mounted with a variety of blades from European and Indian Imports and locally made examples. You can have everything from plain steel to pattern welded blades with interesting layering. Less common are examples with wootz blades. I have ran across just a couple over the years. This example bears a Persian trade blade of the 19th century with long inscription panel to one side, and double cartouche, one a lion, to the opposite side.



The wootz on this blade is very active, bold and with high contrast. The pattern is what you would expect to find on Persian wootz.

SUMMARY

I have been fortunate to find some unusual examples of wootz-bladed weaponry. My best suggestion is to keep your eyes open. Always have a look at any blade in good light and be sure to angle the blade in different directions to see what might be hiding. There is probably more wootz out there hiding in out of polish blades than we know. There are many other examples out there of unusual combinations. I continue my search for the following:

- A complete Yataghan with wootz blade
- Any African hilted sword with wootz blade
- Any Indonesian/Sumatran sword with a wootz blade
- English or European hilted swords with wootz blades
- Any unusual combination with wootz blade

I am not looking for married pieces but natural combinations, although seldom encountered, which can be added to this grouping. Feel free to contact me at rsword007@aol.com should you have such an example for sale.

Also, many thanks to Aleksey G. for putting this pamphlet in a format where the pictures would print well.