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A closer look at

Valiant Trading Company's east asian blades

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- Gear reviews and tests - Edged tools - Long blades -



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Description :

A generic article looking at Valiant Co Indonesian made blades.

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[Valiant trading company](#) has already been discussed extensively on the magazine, looking on a spot by spot basis at specific blades, but I think it deserves a better look, and certainly deserves to centralize all the good information we have disseminated everywhere over the years.

Valiant co has been founded by Suwandi Wigunadharma in Perth, Australia. Suwandi is a collector of ancient traditional [1] Indonesian blades, that decided to go a step further. He now sells new reproductions of ancient designs. [Golok](#), Parang [2], [Klewang](#), [Keris](#), [Kerambit](#), [Barong](#), Talibon, and all sorts of reproductions of ancient East Asian blades. They are more than reproductions, they are real knives, made to be used really hard, and they will sustain that use.

Suwandi's line is impressive, hundreds of different looking big blades, with nothing really under 8 inches.

Valiant sells both spring steel blades and "pamor" blades. Pamor is a stacked pattern welding Damascus which uses vertical layers instead of horizontal layers. All blades are differentially tempered using a mix of clay, sand and bamboo coal.

All the materials used are traditional, water buffalo horn, and hard woods, brass or steel. the craftsmanship is amazing, and the ergonomics of the shaped handles generally fantastic.

The entry models are the "Survival golok" series, in different size, on which you will find much writing in the magazine, but I have never bought a valiant blade that deceived me. They all are great users, much better and friendly to use than any machete you can think of.

Depending on the size and weight, you can find discrete blades, like the Potong golok, or the Kelapa golok, stonger blades, like the parang, kitchen knives or even martial artists weapons, Kerambit, barong, short swordy golok like the loka, even some wakisashi.

All pieces are hand made in [Indonesia](#) at different locations, some are standard local production, some are Suwandi's design.

The Making of Valiant Blades

The steels used are either spring steel, or pamor/damascus. Each step is made by a craftsman specialist of his trade, one will produce pamor, another will forge the blade to shape, another will heat treat them, another will grind them, another will mount them, and another one will make the scabbards and shape the handles...

The making of these fine blades is indeed traditional, done entirely by hand using century old methods. Here are some pictures that Suwandi took in Indonesia.

The forging outlet is a simple opened bamboo hut, the anvils are steel plugs planted in wooden trunks, and the forges are ground forges, similar to what most of Asia uses.



The smiths forging. Note the "plug anvil", a very elegant solution.

The blades are entirely forged to shape, then the spines are covered with a mix of clay, sand and bamboo coal, and they are quenched in a hot brine solution, giving them a differential temper, necessary for edge retention and durability of the blade.



More forging And a better view of the very simple plug anvil

Detail forging. Or maybe Pamor making, looking at the color of the steel?



More detail forging.



The handles are generally partial tangs which are inserted hot in the horn handles, with an addition of powdered ants whose chitin acts as a glue.

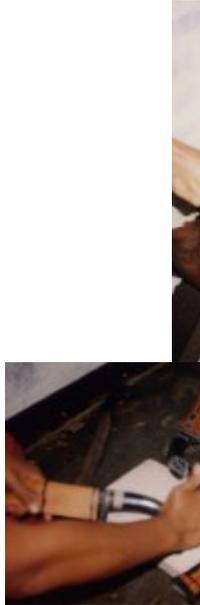
I ever had one horn handle fail, because of my own abuse (a prototype blade with a problem, which I decided to abuse). but fail is a big word, it just cracked, it is actually still usable ! Wooden handles are more subject to breaking and cracking if abused, and I have seen two broken.

Generally the quality is good and consistent, and I have not yet met a poor tempered edge in the production.



A parang A parang is coming nicely out of the very simple ground forge.

Grinding the blades. No power tools here, all is done by hand.



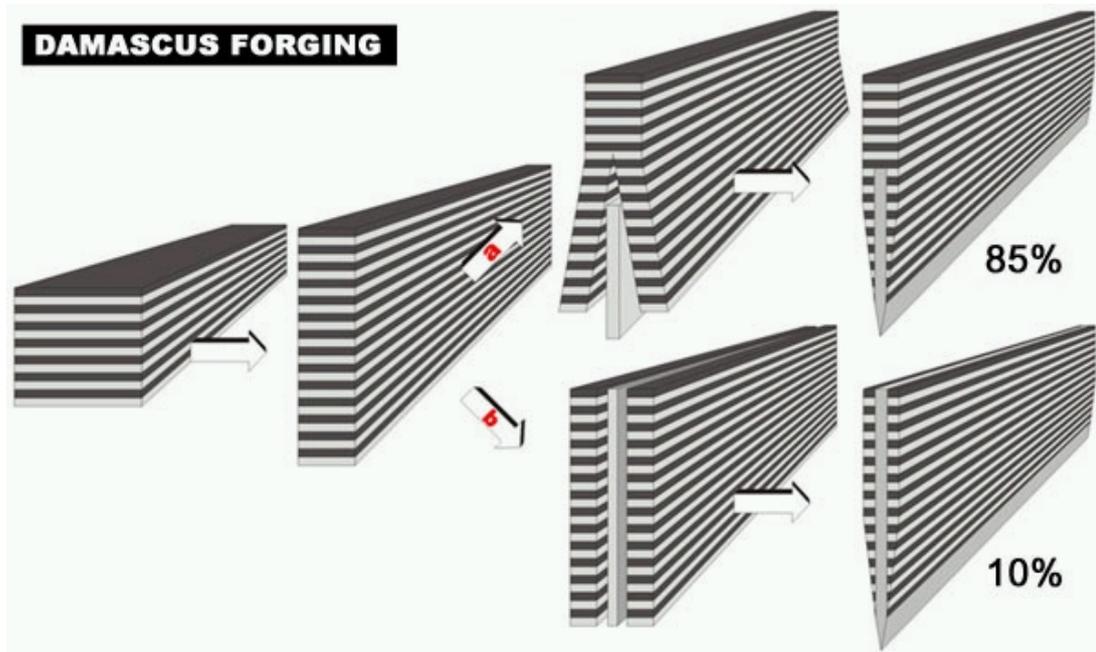
Finishing Finishing handles, crushed stones and leaves are used as sand paper.

Suwandi once told me that there are 11 to 12 hours of work to make a golok.

Valiant Pamor

It really is pattern welded damascus, but as the tem used on Keris blades for such work is Pamor, we will call it pamor in the whole article.

The pamor blades are made from one to 3 or more differently carbon steels, soft , medium , hard. The welding is generally done so that the stratas are vertical in the width of the blade, a solution that differs from what people are used to for knives in Europe and Americas, but which makes sense for impact tools, as the stratas will dampen the shocks better than an homogeneous steel blade.



Valiant's Pamor The edges are rarely that well aligned, but I have yet to hear about one chipping while in use.

Valiant's pamor compared.

Signs of damage on ancient blades have shown delaminations where the blade basically has a slit in the middle, but is still fully functional.

Using Them

Goloks and parangs, being inserted partial tangs, are designed to hit with kinetic energy acquired, if you push on the handle too much at the moment of the shock, you risk breaking the handle (this said, I never cared too much and never broke one). So the right way is to speed the blade and let it hit. The Indonesians for light tasks use a 3 fingers grip, locking the thumb on the index and major, and letting the little finger quite free. Most of the movements are twists from the wrist. only for bigger stuff do they involve elbow, shoulders or spine twists, if ever, as the principle is to let gravity and kinetic energy work.

At the moment of impact, if you pull the blade towards you (or if you maintained it in a "drag behind circular movement" which is the act of "sabrer", you enter the draw cut mode, the same on sabres, where physics are different. You can, using a draw cut, cut a 4" fresh pine sapling without even feeling the blade stop. Backward bent goloks are better to learn a draw cut, and once learned, you can do it with most large cutting implements. On the full convex goloks, the effect is AMAZING, and they just do not get stopped by the material and fly through it.

We know of at least one guys that reported cutting his hand deeply, because he came to cut a thick sapling that usually would stop the blade, and he involuntarily master a draw cut, which sails through the sapling in front of him , continues it's trajectory at same speed, and stops in his left hand. We have also heard of bad cut from unsheathing the blades the very first times, Jimbo even received a bloody blade, an obvious sign that some custom officer had a bad cut somewhere, that is why we wrote [Handling and working with knives, big blades, axes and hatchets..](#) [3]

After, what he different blades can really do, depends of the specific weight, and balance, the same way you would not use a small sword to cut a tree, a small golok will not be better. A SGL or SGM is an incredible tool, with a terrible penetration, and a very good reach (you can cut with the very tip, and most of the blade length).

Effectively you have 2 ways to get power, kinetic energy , mass and speed, right? mass is better for hard woods, but speed can compensate, so on a rotation cutting movement, the tip travels faster, and is the best part to hit for energy transfer. Seen the square-to-the-tip blade on goloks? now you know why...

I admit that I feel better with a golok type of geometry than with a kukri, as I can easily have a kukri glance or deflect, when a golok is much more dynamically stable (at least for my style).

Some of the parangs are frightening. the long ones give an amazing loud crack when the blades hits the wood, which is actually the wood splitting under impact, while being cut.

A last word on handles, all the handles have good ergonomics, even the decorated and shaped ones, they fit the hand very well. Their size is slightly up compared to full tradition, in order to accommodate westerners hands which are bigger than Asian hands.

Quick Review: The Potong Golok

So, let's have a look to a few of these blades:



Bushcraft with a potong A good little blade.



A 9" blade

This is a small golok, with only 9 3/4" of blade, one of the smaller ones available from Valiant.

It is however an excellent lovely bushcraft blade: the weight is right, at some 500 grams nude, 530 grams in sheath, and the shape of both the handle and blade make it extremely useful. There is a tip that can be used at drilling holes, the blade has a good belly, useful for a lot of tasks, and indeed the convex profile and edge are perfect for chopping, cutting sticks, and any tasks that can be thrown at it. There is even a small ricasso that allows a fine grip for delicate tasks.



The potong golok Small and compact.

As a bushcraft tool, it will need some adaptation to retain in the sheath and attach on a belt, this can be done using the Velcro fixing frog that Valiant sells separately and which is very useful. This is my preferred golok, and the only one I can really carry almost everywhere without raising eyebrows.



Golok potong Here with the very useful frog that can be used to carry it more conveniently.

Bushcraft blades Here compared with a tora kukri



Potong Hard wood well cut



Potong Cherry trees do not like it.

Quick Review: The Combo Golok



Golok combo A long and rather heavy golok (15" 3/4, 700 g) that comes with a small bushcraft knife.

Golok combo Here in it's sheath. The frog would benefit being remade in leather, which is a plan I have.

The Combo is a large golok (15 3/5") with a small fixed blade (4") attached using a Velcro frock system.. The large golok is similar to a Large Survival golok, and can be compared to a heavy machete on performance steroids, because of the full convexed blade. Deadly efficient in any kind of vegetation. Very long read which saves the hands, and it can cut a log, saplings, bushes, straighten your bay laurels, and certainly much more, but it is not a small blade, nor a very light one.

The little knife is a good addition, as it complements very well the big blade, in bushcraft conditions the two of them is a very efficient tool in any situation you could throw at it.

I have used the combo a few times to trim a bay of bay laurel that was 15 years past it's trim time, and it works perfectly. The little knife is also very good. The only change I will probably do, is to make the frog out of leather.

It is a big heavy blade, so I would not dream carrying this in the field, but it certainly has it's attraction for heavy bushcrafters in jungle environments.

More Valiant Blades



Golok bengkulu Long, thin and beautiful.



Golok bengkulu A beautiful light but long (17" 1/2 - 600g) golok.



Survival golok large The survival range provides very good entry models. (15" 3/4 - 550 g)

Survival golok medium The survival range provides very good entry models. (14" 3/4 - 550 g)



Survival golok Large Pamor A long (15" 3/4 - 550 g) golok with a superb pamor blade, reasonably light and very efficient.



Horn golok SX A small (9" 1/2, 400 g) golok, comes with a stunning water buffalo sheath. As light as a leuku.

Standard golok 2 13"3/4 and 500 grams, a good sized golok with a stunning dragon handle, which is yet extremely comfortable.



White horn golok A unique model, white buffalo horn is rare! The blade is pamor. The handle represents a "big cat".



Survival golok Large Pamor A long (15" 3/4 - 550 g) golok with a superb pamor blade, reasonably light and very efficient.



Golok Ioka A superb light 15" 3/4 400 g golok. Almost a sword.



Glok Cikeruh 13"3/4 with a fuller, pamor blade, The handle seems to represent a shark head.

Golok naga. A light (12", 400g) pamor blade, with an impressive dragon (naga) head handle.

golok naga Details of the handle.



Parang Nabur In Pamor, 21" 1/4 blade, for 900 grams, It shows it's Dutch heritage, as it is inspired from the Dutch battle cutlass and adapted to Indonesian style.



Parang Lading In Pamor, a 17" 3/4 blade, the handle represents a man's head.

Parang Lading The big pamor Parang



Borneo Parang 17" 1/2 and 700 grams, a big and very efficient parang.



Badik a 7" fixed blade.



Mini Kerambit A pamor version, in rare white horn. A martial art and self defense weapon.

Bendo A kitchen tool, here in Pamor. the handle represents a fish.



Golok cepot (unique) A hand decorated small kitchen golok, representing big cats on the handle and sheath.

Valiant related links

(in the magazine)

[Valiant Goloks](#)

[Valiant Company Survival Golok](#)

[Banana tree VS Valiant blades](#)

[Valiant Golok Hitam](#)

[Large Bolo Camp](#)

[Goloks](#)

[Horn Golok Small](#)

[Parang Lading and Klewang Sumbawa](#)

[Horn Golok Large](#)

[Golok Kelapa](#)

[Sharpening and Refiling Traditional Convex Blades](#)

[Convex Profiling and Sharpening by Hand HOW-TO](#)

Conclusion

The Valiant line is amazing. An incredible number of blade shapes is proposed, all very traditional, or a bit less, like the hybrid line. The materials used, from buffalo horn to rare hard woods, spring steel, pamor, are of the best quality. All blades are totally hand made, differentially hardened in clay, and indeed ready for hard use. All that, and the prices are still reasonable ! You will certainly get more pleasure from a 50 us\$ golok than from a 200 us\$ folder, I know, I did!

Don't take these as production knives, they are real custom knives.

There has been much writing in our magazine about Valiant blades, so I will not repeat what has been said, but in the field, they do behave amazingly well in general, keeping a good edge, and being very efficient in terms of performance, ease to use, as well as ergonomics. (yet remember they are deadly dangerous)

Valiant site's in Australia is available at [Valiant Trading co](#). North American readers can also buy from [this retailer](#).

Post-scriptum :27/03/2007 V1.0 Inception

[1] I recommend the reading of [Malay World Edged Weapons](#) for those interested.

[2] which means "knife" in Indonesian

[3] An advice, do not think that because you can handle a machete, you are safe with these, a machete cuts poorly, these are 14 inches of razor sharp steel!