Why water stones?

Posted by Scott Sherman - 20 Oct 2012 08:42

I just recently became a devotee of self sharpening a couple of months ago. Before that, I thought only experts could sharpen my knives because there was such a dizzying array of methods and materials by which it could be done and until somewhat recently, it was all done freehand by craftsmen who probably learned at the hand of other experienced craftsmen.

Enter guided systems like WE (and others) which made expert results obtainable by inexperienced, unskilled knife collectors or someone with a collection of dull kitchen knives which is what got me started. So now I have bought into this WE system and decided to get a PP2. The PP2 was put together at a time when the 1200-1600 ceramic stone was not available due to some production problems (which now seem to have been resolved). This left a gap in the progression of abrasives between the 1000 grit diamond stone and the next available micro fine ceramic stone which shipped as part of the PP2.

Because of that gap, I began to consider the available options including the Chosera water stones made for the Wicked Edge guided rod system. The 2000-3000 and 5000 -10000 sets would very capably fill that gap but going from the proprietary (easy to use) WE stones to the Japanese water stones was messy and the stones have different dimensions making it more complicated to set the bevel etc.

However, having said all that, I have noticed among some here in this forum, there is a preference for using the water stones and I could not help but wonder why. So I would love to hear from those who prefer and use the water stones or who are considering buying them or perhaps you bought them to fill the gap and no longer use them because the 1200-1600 ceramic stone is now available. I would appreciate it if you could share your thoughts and experiences. What do you like about them? Do you regret getting them or if you did would you never consider using the diamond and ceramics. Perhaps you only use water stones, would you also get some of the diamond or ceramics now to supplement your water stones?

I know there is a different feedback and user experience with water stones , but to my untrained eye, you seem to be able to obtain about the same results with the dry, easier to use diamond and ceramic stones, or am I missing something? I am guessing that some here only used water stones freehand before the guided rods were introduced and liked being able to use them with the new rod system and just stuck with the water stones. If so, what is your feelings about diamond and ceramic stones vs water stones?

Thanks for your feedback and insight I am hoping others here are also curious and may learn something here.

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by PhilipPasteur - 14 Jan 2013 09:28

[quote="BluntCut" post=8478]**PhilipPasteur wrote:**

Hi Phil,

A moderate amt of mud in conjunction with fixed abrasives indeed would abrade & polish faster. My answer was for mud only (i.e. only loose abrasives), thus it's lapping not? For a same grit, lapping yield finer finishes - just like stropping is one directional lapping. I don't think we disagree, just viewing this matter at a different angle.

I missed this before I wwrote the above. I guess that I was confused because we started talking about using mud on waterstones while sharpening. Certainly loose abrasives can be used for lapping. I have a glass plate with a variety of abrasives that I sprinkle on the glass for lapping different items. I have used this method for some of my bench stones, but it is pretty messy. However with the proper abrasive and a very flat surface, and a significant amount of effort, the results are outstanding. Diamond plates make this much easier, but way more expensive. I have not figured out a way to use loose abrasives for sharpening though. Anyway, now I understand how lapping got into the conversation.

Phil

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by JamesBell - 14 Jan 2013 09:40

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* !!! THANK YOU !!! *

For all of your work, time and information that all of you put into the WE Forum.

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by leomitch - 14 Jan 2013 10:03

I will add my thanks to those who are participating in this most instructive back and forth. This is the kind of thread that adds to the knowledge of everyone. The experiences of the few is important to the many! Thanks to all who are participating and please continue. I am learning a lot here that will improve my sharpening skills.

Cheers

Leo

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by Mikedoh - 14 Jan 2013 12:05

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I've used one of the ceramic stones to flatten/level/lap my 8k super stone. I then wondered about using the ceramic with the 8K's mud on it. I know there is some technique out there that is similar in idea.

Anyone done this?

Any possible harm to the ceramic?

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by KenBuzbee - 14 Jan 2013 13:25

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Mikedoh wrote:

Anyone done this?

Any possible harm to the ceramic?

I haven't but I doubt you'll hurt anything.

Ken

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by PhilipPasteur - 14 Jan 2013 13:56

Mikedoh wrote:

I've used one of the ceramic stones to flatten/level/lap my 8k super stone. I then wondered about using the ceramic with the 8K's mud on it. I know there is some technique out there that is similar in idea.

Anyone done this?

Any possible harm to the ceramic?

I haven't, mostly because I do not have the 8K stone. What would you be hoping to get out of the combination?

Which one of the ceramics are you talking about?

Phil

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by Mikedoh - 14 Jan 2013 14:12

I think it was the 1200 ceramic.

Since It made some mud, I thought maybe it could be used (as opposed to washed off and wasted) and refine the edge more than the 1200 alone.

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by PhilipPasteur - 14 Jan 2013 20:48

I don't think it would hurt anything... but I also don't think it would last long.

Heck, give it a try and see what you think...

Phil

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by jendeindustries - 16 Jan 2013 06:14

I think we need a quick clarification of the differences between mud, swarf, and slurry because they do produce different results.

MUD: aka *Paste*, is the resulting breakdown of the abrasive medium, metal particles, and/or binder that produces a finer/less invasive scratch pattern then the advertised grit. It is advantageous when using finer stones, but may not be the most wanted at lower grits. Also, there is a degree of rounding of the edge usually associated with using mud/paste because the more you use it, the finer the mud gets (to a point), but the stone medium will continue to wear with more use - how much depends on the stone.

SLURRY: is loose abrasive on the surface of a stone that is most associated with adding cutting power to a stone, but is not always the case. We mostly see diamond plates that are coarser than the stone itself to create the slurry, which is the most aggressive because it not only releases the abrasive, but also textures the surface of the stone to have more peaks that abrade more readily than an even surface. (You'll often feel a freshly lapped stone feels really aggressive, but after a few knives, the stone feels like it has less action). Same-stone/grit slurries, are also aggressive, and you can usually play with the concentration to make it more or less aggressive. This type of slurry usually leaves a "deeper" version of the advertised grit because, as mentioned before, mud/paste can form during its use, but the loose abrasives cut deeper than those fixed in the matrix. Lastly, you can use a finer grit slurry on a coarser grit stone for polishing effects, which is often used on Japanese Naturals. Technically, it is used more as a mud, IMO.

SWARF: is the stuff on the stone that impedes the stone from working (or loads it up) - usually the buildup of abraded metal. This is most commonly a problem with hard stones such as Shaptons or ceramics.

These are sometimes tricky definitions, for example, the WEPS ceramics load up, which slows them down while making them finer. If you want it to load up, then it is a paste or mud, but if you don't want it, then it is swarf!

So if you want to use some of the mud from one stone on another, it is all good!

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by PhilipPasteur - 16 Jan 2013 21:16

Hey tom,

Wouldn't Mud and Slurry amount to the same thing, just at different stages of concentration of the particles involved? One just has more liquid (usually water of course) in it than the other. The common definition of a slurry is " a ***thin*** mixture of water and an insoluable solid". This is pretty equivocal. After all, what it 'thin"? We can form a slurry as you mention, perhaps with diamonds or a nagura... as it and the stone dries it becomes what you define as mud. Slurry it seems, can be a broad range of particle concentrations. So, how do you define the demarcation between the two stages?

I know this is sematics to a degree, but if we are to be able to nail down what is happeing at the edge when using either mud or slurry, isn't it also important to know what we are actually using, according to the definitions.

I am curious because I have seen much written on the subject, but nothing that allows me to know what I should really call what I am seeing on my stones. I can tell the difference in my results, but in the absence of defined terms, I have no accepted way of telling anyone what I was actually doing to get there..

Phil

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