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STONE ADZES FROM VADRAVADRA VILLAGE, GAU ISLAND

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This paper is based on a collection of adzes obtained during a recent field survey to Gau Island conducted by the Fiji Museum. Three ring-ditch sites were mapped on this island in the Lomaviti Group, namely (a) Vadravadra LO-G 4/37, (b) Lovu LO-G 4/33 and (c) Yadua LO-G 4/10, all of which are situated on a flat beach fringe over the southern coastline. All these ring-ditches were known to be occupied and defended in 1854 since Gau was surveyed by the Admiralty in that year. On one of these sites (Vadravadra LO-G 4/37) the area enclosed by the ditches is now all kava plantation and no form or outline of house mounds are visible. Apart from sherds, these eight stone adzes were found on the surface in addition to a gunflint and a turtle bone artefact whose significance is unknown at present. On an earlier visit, two other ring-ditch sites were mapped at the north end of Gau (Moce 1971: 193).

DESCRIPTION

The terminology used to describe the adze is that used by Buck, Emory, Stokes and Skinner (1930: 174) and Duff (1959: 121). The first specimen (Fig. 1a) is the butt of a partly damaged one with a plano-convex cross-section. It is well polished on three planes and partly hammer dressed too. The bevel and cutting edge are missing and the poll is flaked. One side is hammer dressed without any polishing while the other side has been formed by two different polishing operations.

Measurements:	Length	70 mm 2 3/4 ins.
	Width	73 mm 2 7/8 ins.
	Thickness	25 mm 1 in.

The next specimen (Fig. 1b) also has a plano-convex cross-section, but it tends towards a sub-triangular section near the poll. The surface is well polished except for the poll which is hammer dressed with only a narrow polished transverse strip. Like the previous specimen, one side has been formed by two different polishing operations.

Measurements:	Length	85 mm 3 1/4 ins
	Width	45 mm 1 3/4 ins
	Thickness	15 mm 5/8ths ins

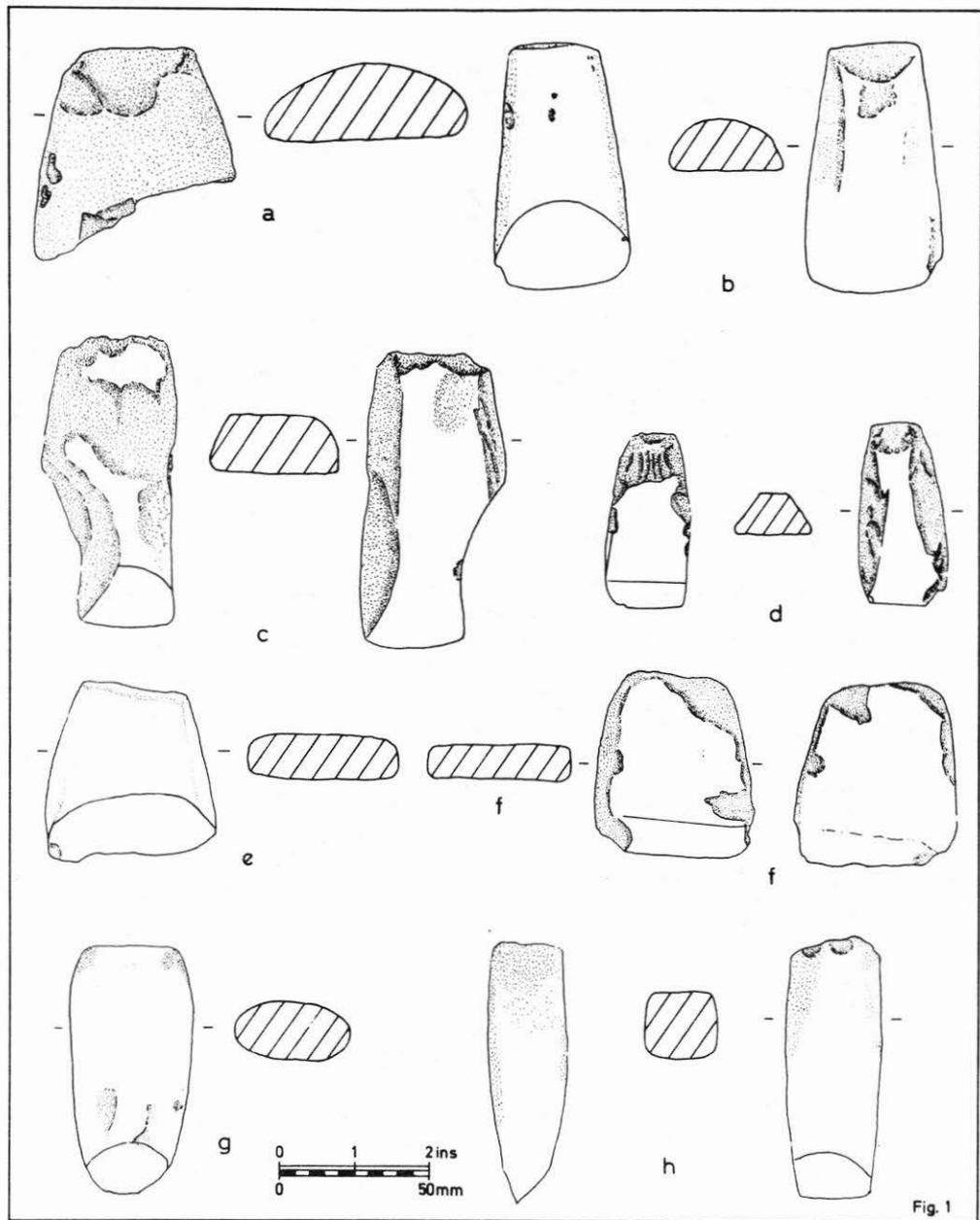


Fig. 1

Figure 1c has a trapezoid cross-section bordering on the sub-triangular towards the poll and is more typical of Samoan adzes, although examples occur in different parts of Fiji. It is partly polished on both sides with flaking towards the poll on both front and back. The cutting edge of the steep bevel is partly damaged too.

Measurements:	Length	60 mm 2 3/8 ins
	Width	30 mm 1 1/8 ins
	Thickness	15 mm 5/8ths ins

The next specimen (Fig. 1d) has a shallow trapezoid or roughly sub-triangular section. Part of the bevel and cutting edge are damaged. The poll is flaked and angled as well as the back. The left side is flaked and partly polished with three different polishing operations clearly visible. The adze is similar to the Duff 2c which appears to be more typical of many Samoan adzes in which the front is narrower than the back.

Measurements:	Length	101 mm 4 ins
	Width	48 mm 1 7/8 ins
	Thickness	22 mm 7/8ths ins

This specimen (Fig. 1e) has a rectangular cross-section with rounded junctions of the sides and the other two planes. The sides taper towards a squared and partly polished poll which shows three different polished planes. The cutting edge and front are damaged with all other surfaces well ground. This adze appears to be made of a fine-grained black basalt and seems to approach a short version of Duff 2b type of adze.

Measurements:	Length	64 mm 2 1/2 ins
	Width	54 mm 2 1/8th ins
	Thickness	15 mm 5/8ths ins

This adze (Fig. 1f) is similar in form to the previous one, but it has a more angular junction except where there is prominent hammer dressing towards the unground poll. It has a steep bevel with the cutting edge partly damaged.

Measurements:	Length	63 mm 2 1/2 ins
	Width	54 mm 2 1/8 ins
	Thickness	15 mm 5/8ths ins

Fig. 1g is a wedge-shaped adze of oval cross-section with a flat hammer-dressed poll. This bruising is also seen on one side near the poll, making a roughened grip with planes of front and back reduced sharply to meet the poll. The other surfaces are well polished with a distinctive curved cutting edge.

Measurements:	Length	85 mm $3\frac{1}{2}$ ins
	Width	40 mm $1\frac{5}{8}$ ins
	Thickness	28 mm $1\frac{1}{8}$ ins

Fig. 1h. This is somewhat similar to the previous adze except that it has a square cross-section with rounded junctions only at the poll end which results from hammer dressing to form a lashing aid. The front portion of the junctions of the sides and other planes show a distinct polishing plane. The poll is hammer dressed.

Measurements:	Length	85 mm $3\frac{1}{2}$ ins
	Width	40 mm $1\frac{5}{8}$ ins
	Thickness	28 mm $1\frac{1}{8}$ ins

This possible turtle bone specimen, whose significance is not known, has a plano-convex cross-section. The cutting edge has an asymmetrical curve and is well ground, while the broken blade reveals a cancellous or spongy interior. It is possible that this implement, even if unhafted, could have been used as a breadfruit splitter or some such related function. The nearest parallel is the taku or taro scraper of pearl shell from Kapingamarangi which was held in the hand and whose cutting edge was similar to the Gau specimen (Buck 1950: 44).

This collection of adzes is interesting because it contains the early forms of plano-convex adzes with squared poll, trapezoid and rectangular sectioned adzes more typical of West Polynesia and two adzes with hammer dressing on the butt to help with lashing. The latter examples, together with unpublished ones, expand the number of adzes with such treatment previously noted by the Director of the Fiji Museum (Palmer 1969: 97).

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(Editors' Note: Contents of Vol. 14, No. 4 incorrectly record Kolinio Moce as "Mouce", although the correct name is applied to the paper on page 193.)

