

FIG. 1. CURVED STONE ADZE. (OBVERSE.)

Hawaiian Curved Adzes.

BY WILLIAM T. BRIGHAM.

It has long been a puzzle to me how the ancient Hawaiians cut the bottom of their canoes on the inside so evenly curved: it seems possible only on the supposition that polishing stones were used to grind down the irregular cut of the common adze which seldom has a face of more than two inches in width. In the extensive collection of stone adzes in this Museum there is not one that a modern carpenter would have selected for cutting a canoe bottom. I had seen the old-time canoe makers wield the clumsy looking stone adze (after cutting the rough work with a foreign steel adze) with a skill and certainty difficult to acquire, leaving the outside of the canoe with a fairly smooth surface, but I never happened to meet one working on the inside, which was generally left to the last.

Anyone who has seen the procedure of bailing out a genuine native canoe with a fragment of gourd umeke will understand the importance of a smooth, evenly curved bottom. It was gratifying to find at last a tool capable of doing what seemed needed in fashioning such a bottom. During the past year Mr. William Wagener has brought to my notice an adze found by him in Hamakua, Hawaii. To him it was a rare form, as he had seen only one other, and he deposited it in this Museum for study and casting. As will be seen in Fig. 1, the shank has been broken (recently) and there are a few nicks in the cutting edge, but the finish is careful and complete. If we allow for the broken shank its weight would exceed 4.5 lbs. Its peculiarity consists in the double curve of its cutting edge which is beautifully regular. The stone is dark-blue phonolite with a brown oxydized surface. Weight 3 lbs. 9 oz.; breadth 5.7 in.; length 8.2 in. (10.2 when entire?); thickness 2 in. (Figs. 1 and 2.)

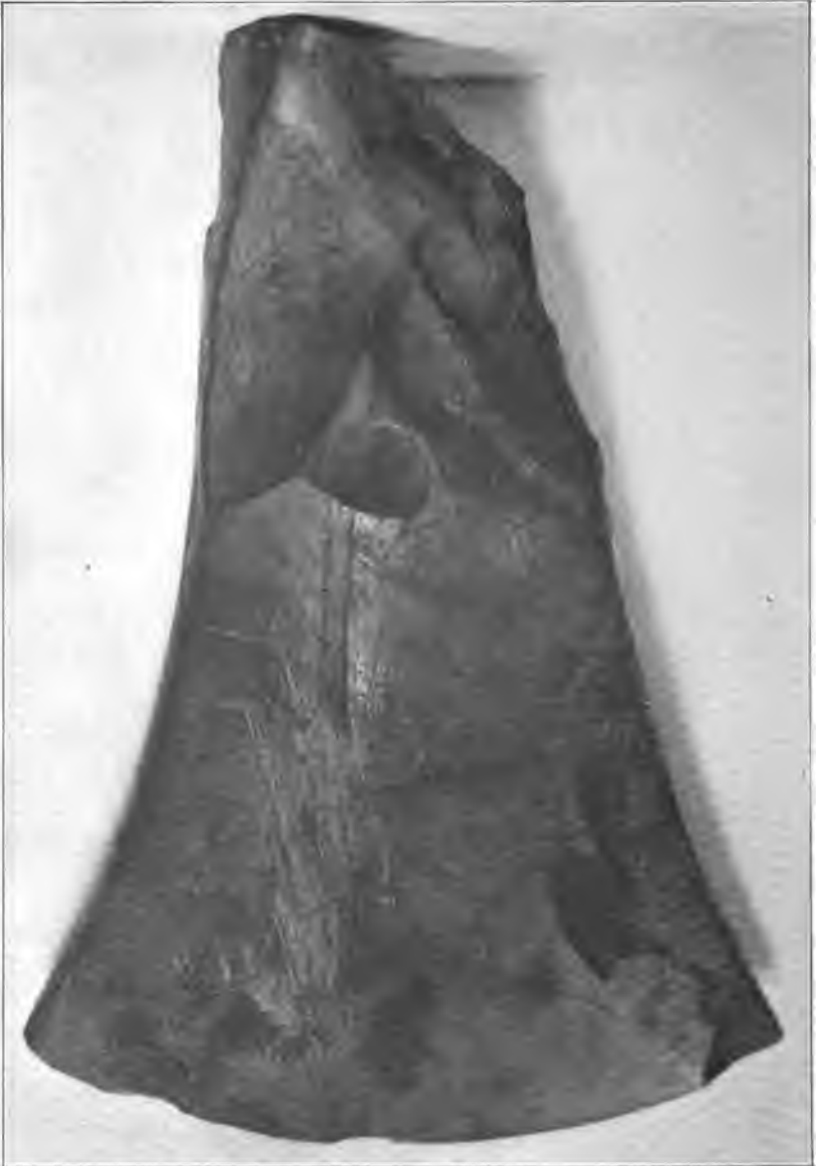


FIG. 2. CURVED STONE ADZE. (FRONT.)