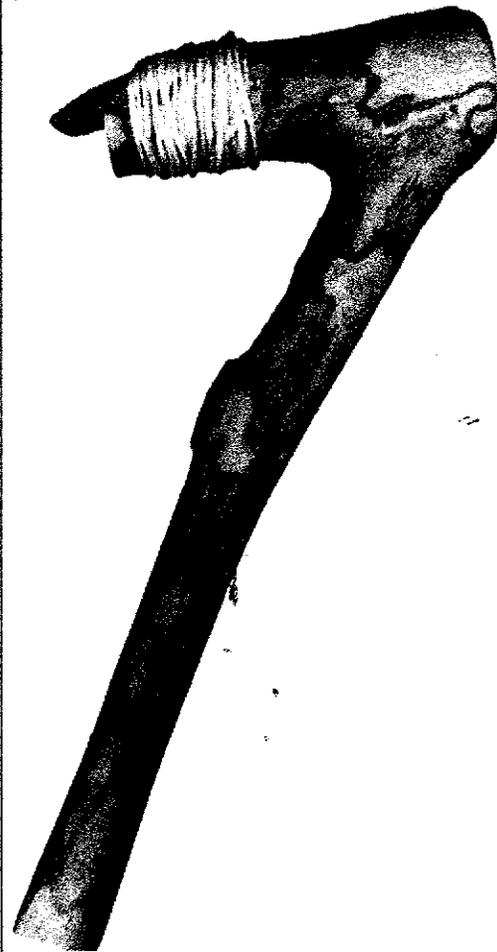


Woodworking Tool Tradition

We archeologists cannot seem to agree on whether to call them adzes, gouges, distally beveled tools, or just plain tools, but these distinctive chipped-stone artifacts represent a long-lived tradition of making woodworking tools in the South Texas Plains and they are found almost everywhere in the region. Not only are they geographically widespread, but various forms of these artifacts were used throughout most of the prehistoric era, from before 10,000 years ago onward. We prefer to call them "adzes" and "gouges," as both are functional terms that echo how we believe these tools were used.

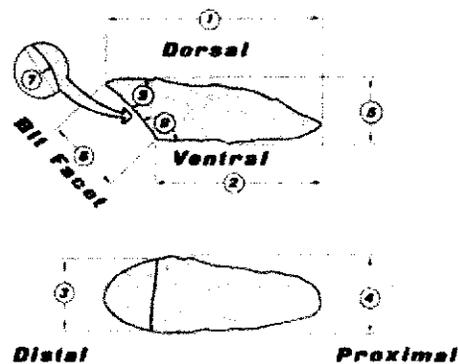
First and foremost they were woodworking tools, although some of them were used on scraping and shaping bone, hides, and plants from time to time. This tool class is yet another example of the Swiss-army-knife-like versatility of many of the stone tool forms used in the region (see **Recycling**). In the South Texas Plains, necessity was the mother of adaptive tool use, we might say. But let's stick with the main function—woodworking—because that is the most common and consistent kind of use wear evidence documented by several careful microscopic studies of these tools. **Why**, you might wonder, **were woodworking tools so common** in a region that is not known for its forests of towering trees? We'll come back to this very good question after describing these tools and adding some technical detail.

Adzes and gouges are relatively chunky stone tools that have a beveled (steep-angled) working end (bit) as a common element and most of them are wider at the working (distal) end than the opposite (proximal) end, which is always rounded or blunt pointed. Whether they have rounded or pointed proximal ends, and convex, straight, or concave working edges, they all are characterized by distally beveled working edges that form an angle ranging from 45-85 degrees. Most were bifacially made, but some, especially early forms were unifacial and made on large flakes in such a way that they have a flat (ventral) face and a humped and flaked (dorsal) face. And



Experimental adze made by author Steve Tomka. This tool works most effectively when used in a "chopping, while pulling" motion. The wooden handle is made from a conveniently branched small tree, thus providing the correct angle for effective woodworking.

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Adze terminology, from Guadalupe tool study. Brown 1985, Figure 3.

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