

# Neolithic Tools From Nepal

- Janak Lal Sharma

In recent decades considerable information has become available concerning the broad physiographic divisions, the general cultural pattern and the working chronological frame work of the Neolithic culture. But none of these aspects of study of the Neolithic population in Nepal is yet conclusive. The Neolithic culture of the Himalayan region and Tarai region, till recently, was represented by surface collections of stone axes from Charikot in Dolkha District, Jugu Gaon (Khopasi) in Kavreplanchok District and Kottanri in Nawalparasi District, Lumbini Zone. The majority of the tools of these regions belong to the cyclic and sub-rectangular variety of celts with curved medial ground edges which correspond to the principal types of the Assam and North - Eastern India groups.

It is, however, interesting to observe that the surface collections from these regions had a sprinkling of small axes of rounded forms and cyclic axes and east-northern variety. The indication of two different traditions meeting somewhere in the Himalayan area had long been known to us. But little has been done to investigate the problem in the field; instead, the question has been raised doubting the very existence of any primary Neolithic Culture in this region, perhaps, largely due to the

absence of field work leading to the identification of the Neolithic sites. In order to investigate the problem at its roots systematic explorations carried out in the Himalayan and Tarai region in the general supervision of Department of Archaeology, H. M. G.

The explorations conducted in the central Nepal area between the Sunkosi river in the east and the Gandaki river in the west. The Pre-Cambrians formation is exposed in Trisuli Bazar and Suparitar series. The lithology is chlorite, phyllite, gritty phyllite and bands of white quartzite. Above the Pre-Cambrians formation lies unconformably the Phulehowki and Chandragiri formation which consists of sand stone, dolomite, hematite, quartzite and marble called as Silurian formation. Eocene basin is suspected in upper Danggarhi in the north of limestone ridge and may be in faulted position. The lithology is purplish phyllite brown sandstone and shales. After the Eocene formation the Churia groups exposed in the north of Hetaura and same from Amlekhganj, it contains unconsolidated sand, pebble beds and diatomaceous white clay.

## Typology

The neolith may be classified into three functional types-celts, adzes and chisel.

All the three types belong to the category of edged-tools. They have been further subdivided on the basis of external form, working-edge, medial cross-section and butt-end. The preponderance of celts are obvious. The tools are in fairly fresh condition and some of them still retain sharp edges. They are invariably in finished stage of manufacturing. The majority of them are not patinated. These specimens are complete or nearly to complete and recognizable fragments forming parts of edge, butt etc.

Celts are small in size, rounded and cyclic in form and have bi-facial working edges. The butt-ends are either rounded or flat. The medial cross-sections are mainly confined to two geometric forms, ovaloid and cyclic or sub-rectangular.

### Discription

**CHARIKOT:-** (27°28'-28° Lat., 85°50'-86°32'). The site is situated on the right bank of Sunkosi river and in Dolkha District of Janakpur Zone. CHARIKOT is 134 kms east from Kathmandu. It is in the Central Development Region. So far only seven tools are recovered from Surface Collections. These Neolithic celts mainly fashioned on Basalt stone have been recovered. A few rounded celts having Proto-types in Eastern India, however, were also met with. Till recently all these celts, cyclic and rounded, had been surface collections and as such nothing was known about their archaeological context. So far no Neolithic site has been located in the Himalayan Valley and Tarai region in Nepal.

1. The specimen, an axe, is made of dolorite, and black in colour. It is 9.5 cm. in length and 4.7 cm. broad at its broadest point near the slightly curved edge and the thickness is 1.6 cm. It is cyclic in form, ovaloid cross-

section, straight working sharp edge, straight flattened thick butt-end.

2. The specimen, an axe, is made of rough quality granite and blakish grey in colour. It is 7.1 cm. in length, width is 3.9. cm. near the edge, and thickness is 1.6 cm. It is cyclic in form, trapezoidal transverse-section convex working-edge on plan, bevelled edge on longitudinal cross-section, butt-end rounded.
3. The neolith of basalt stone and black in colour. It is 7.3 cm. length, 4.8 cm. width at its broadest point above the cutting edge and the thickness is 1.2 cm. It is slightly elongated, one of the side of the cutting-edge is chamferred; the edge-damaged caused by use of the neolith. It is slightly large in size and rounded butt-end.
4. The longest celt which is whitish grey phyllite, an axe, measuring in length 10.5 cm., 5.4 cm. width at the cutting-edge and thickness is 1.8 cm. It is different from others that it has oblique working-edge and rounded butt-end.
5. This specimen made of igneous basalt celt appears to be used for cutting or chopping light wood or soft grass or reeds and plants. It is 6 cm. in length, 4 cm. in width and the thickness is 0.9 cm. It is rectangular in form, trapezoidal transverse cross-section, convex working-edge on plan, bevelled edge on longitudinal cross-section, and straight butt-end.
6. The longest chisel is one of the whitish grey phyllite in very rough-condition. It is 13.1 cm. length, 6.5 cm in width near the cutting edge and thickness reads 2.7 cm. It is rounded in form, roughly ovaloid cross-section, convex working-edge and rounded butt-end.

7. The specimen, an axe, made of rough quality of granite comparable to no. 2. It is 5.5 cm. in length, 4.2 cm. in width and thickness is 1.7 cm. It is slightly elongated, sides are bevelled and rounded working-edge.
8. This Neolith is recovered from Jugugaon in Kavrepalanchok District, about half km. away from Panauti, on the right bank of Rosi river down stream west on the surface. It is also a celt. The specimen, an axe, is made of dolorite, and in black colour. It is 6.5 cm. in length, and 4.3 cm. broad at its broadest point near the slightly curved-edge and the thickness is 1.5 cm. It is cyclic in form, slightly elongated, trapezoidal transverse cross-section, convex working-edge on plan, bevelled edge on longitudinal cross-section, butt-end damaged. One of the side of the cutting-edge is chamfered.
9. This specimen, recovered from Lubhu, Lalitpur District. The site is situated 6 kms. towards south-east direction from Kathmandu, on the right bank of Godawari river. The finding spot is south-west corner of the town from the base ditch of the school. It is spade type tool. The material is phyllite Alibrite Jini? The length, width and thickness of the neolith reads 11.3 cm., 8.4 cm. and 3 cm. respectively. It is elongated in form, straight cutting edge and rounded butt-end. One of the side of the cutting-edge is chamfered. This neolith may be kept in doubtful stage.
10. (Northern Region)- This specimen, neolith is recovered from the northern region which is unknown. This tool can be kept in chisel group, which is whitish grey phyllite in fresh condition. It is rectangular in form and fairly elongated, about three times longer than the width. Its length, width and thickness reads 9.4 cm., 3.3 cm. and 1.6 cm. respectively. It is ovaloid cross-section, both the lateral sides are straight, straight working edge and flattened thick butt-end.
11. **KOTTANRI** (Nawalparasi District Lat. 27°24' 0" - Long. 83°55' 0"). The site Kottanri is situated on the right bank of Danda Khola which is a tributary nala of Narayani river. It represents the only two specimens from the Narayani river area which find spot is known as straitigraphically. The tool is in fairly fresh condition, The edge-damage caused by use is confined by the appearance of the tool. It is a master piece among all the neolith. The neolith is rounded in form, ovaloid cross-section, straight working-edge and rounded butt-end. The mean length, width and thickness is about 10 cm, 6.7 cm. and 3.3 cm. respectively.
12. From the above site another fragment of a neolithic recovered. The butt-end and working edge are damaged. So the remaining parts of the tool read length, width and thickness is as 12.7 cm., 7.8 cm., and 3.5 cm. On the basis of grey ware and its associated Pottery; surface collection from this side, it may be suggest that there we can get some archaeological evidences about the Neolithic Phase upto historical period.
13. **MORANG**. This neolith tool has been sent by the former judge Mr. Chandra Jung Thapa of Biratnagar to the Department of Archaeology, H. M. G. on 2040/2/29. It was discovered, according to the source provided to us by him, at Jhapa Baijanathpur Village Panchayat. It is a village located at

7.5 km. north-east from Biratnagar, Morang District, Koshi Zone, the Eastern Development Region. A gentleman Mr. Devan Rajvanshi of the same village is credited to have discovered this tool at the time when he was extending the depth of his fish-pond. This tool was grounded 9 ft. deep from the surface. In the month of Ashada this tool was for the first time discovered by him. The specimen, an axe, made of Phyllite and quartzite with mixed texture. It measures 8.2 length, 6.7 cm. width and thickness reads 2.1 cm. It is cyclic in form, ovaloid cross-section, rounded working sharp-edge, straight flattened thick butt-end which is damaged and one side of working edge is chamfered.

### Conclusion

The limited studies so far have indicated an extensive area stretching from Dang, Nawalparasi, Morang in the inter-madiate valley to the central Himalayan belt Charikot, Jugu-gaon and Lubhu.

The raw material is basically basalt, granite and phyllite. Basalt has been used in all the tool-types while granite and phyllite are limited to celts alone. The source of igneous rock is still not located in Nepal. From the internal evidence it appears that the tools were manufactured probably right at the source of raw material since no evidence of manufacture including heritage of the same was found in the process of exploration. Of course the tools may compare with Assam and North-East India. So the distributional movement into Nepal may have taken place from that direction, on the basis, merely, of typology.

About the technique of the fabrication it may be stated that from the avai-

lable material it is difficult to reconstruct the various processes of manufacturing involved therein since the tools recovered are mostly in finished form; there is hardly any specimen of fabricating stage. The completely ground body of the tools adds further difficulty in drawing information about the various stages of fabrication.

At the present stage of our knowledge it is, perhaps, not possible to determine conclusively the chronology. The absence as yet of any find in a stratigraphic context leaves us with typology alone as the determinant factor in respect of chronology. Looking at the assemblage recovered from the occupational debris of the neolithic sites of Assam and Daojali Hading situated in the North Cachar is a fossil-site of the cord-impressed ware complex of eastern India, the radio-carbon date is available in second millennium B. C.

### Acknowledgement

It is worthless to repeat here again that very few work has been done in the field of neolithic culture in Nepal. For the first time an article was written in this subject in 'ANCIENT NEPAL' Vol-9, October 1969, the Journal of the Department of Archaeology. And in the same journal this is my second article dealing with the same subject once more.

To complete this article, the Curio-Sanction Officer of the Department of Archaeology, Mr. Devendra Nath Tiwari has helped me immensely.

In the same, all the drawing illustrated in this article has been drawn by the modeller cum-artist Mr. Ravi Kiran Manandhar. Like-wise, the necessary photographs given in the article is taken by Mr. Puspa Man Chitrakar, Balaram Chitrakar and microfilmist Mr. Ciniya Ratna Tamra-

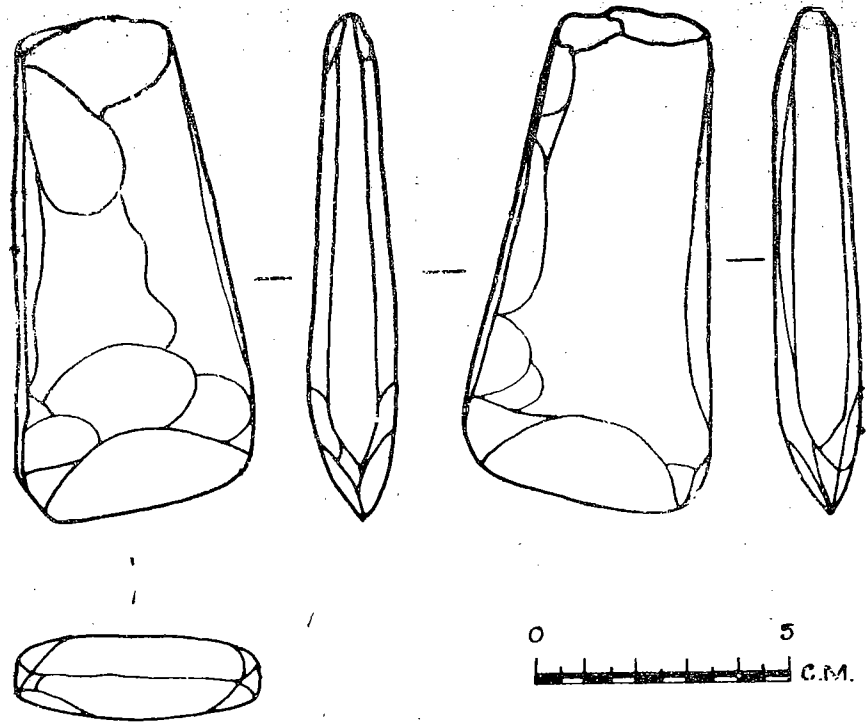
kar. I am grateful to Mr. Govind Sharma, an Engineering Geologist, Department of Electricity, H. M. G. for kindly given me the Geological report of the neolithic tools. For this article I have obtained one tool from former judge Mr. Chandra Jung Thapa, Biratnagar and two tools from Mr. Madan Mani Dixit & Mr. Vishnu Prasad Khanal, Chief of the Pokhara Museum. Except these three, all other tools have been collected by myself. During my field work, Dr. A. Ya. Shchetenko, Leningrad, USSR and

one of my friend, now a lecturer at the Tribhuvan University, Dr. Vishnu Bahadur Shrestha have immensely helped me.

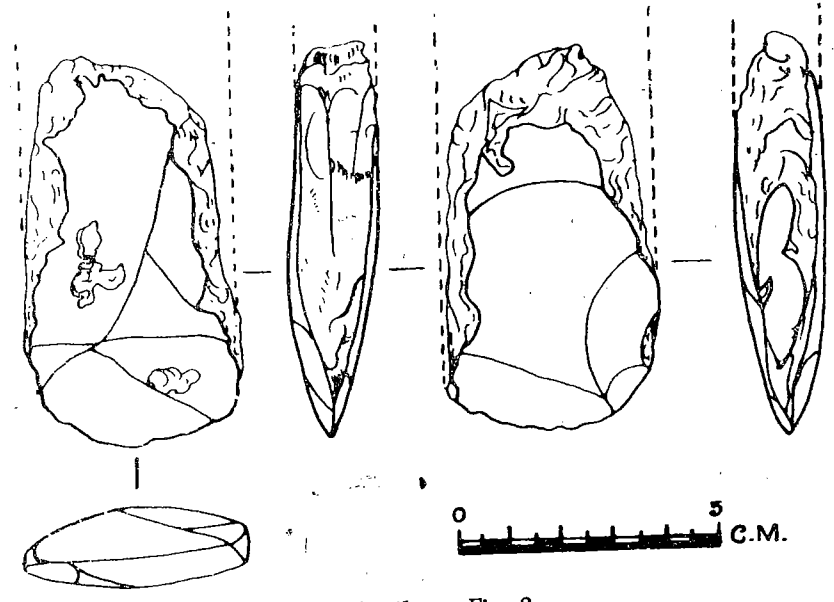
Last but not least, I can not but render my sincere gratitude to the then Director General of the Department of Archaeology, presently the additional secretary of the Ministry of Education & Culture, Mr. Ramesh Jung Thapa for his continues stimulation and encouragement given to me to write something in this field.

### Selected References

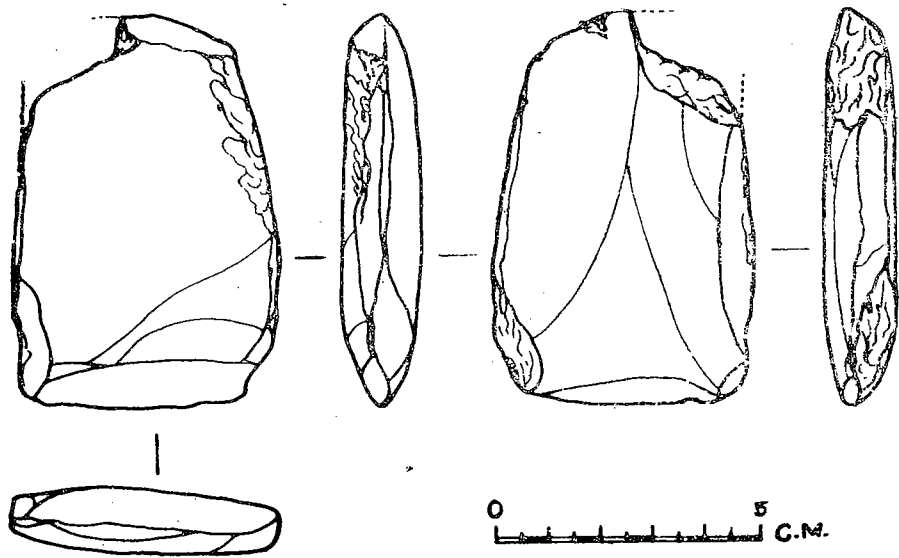
- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Banerjee, N. R. and Sharma, J. L. | 1969- Neolithic Tools from Nepal and Sikkim.   |
| Ghosh, N. C.                      | 1970- On the Neolithic Pottery of Eastern India, P. 337.                                     |
| Misra, V. D.                      | 1977- Some Aspects of Indian Archaeology.  |
| Rao. S. N.                        | 1977- Excavation at Sarutaru: A Neolithic Site in Assam, Man and Environment, I.             |
| Sharma, C. K.                     | 1977- Geology of Nepal.  |
| Sharma, G. R. and Others          | 1980- Beginnings of Agriculture.   |
| Sharma, T. C.                     | 1967- A note on the Neolithic Pottery from Assam, Man, (N. S.), II, No. 1.                   |
| Shchetenko, A. Ya.                | 1979- Prehistoric Hindustan.   |
| Varma, B. S.                      | 1971- Excavations at Chirand: New Light on Indian Neolithic Culture Complex, Puratattva, IV. |



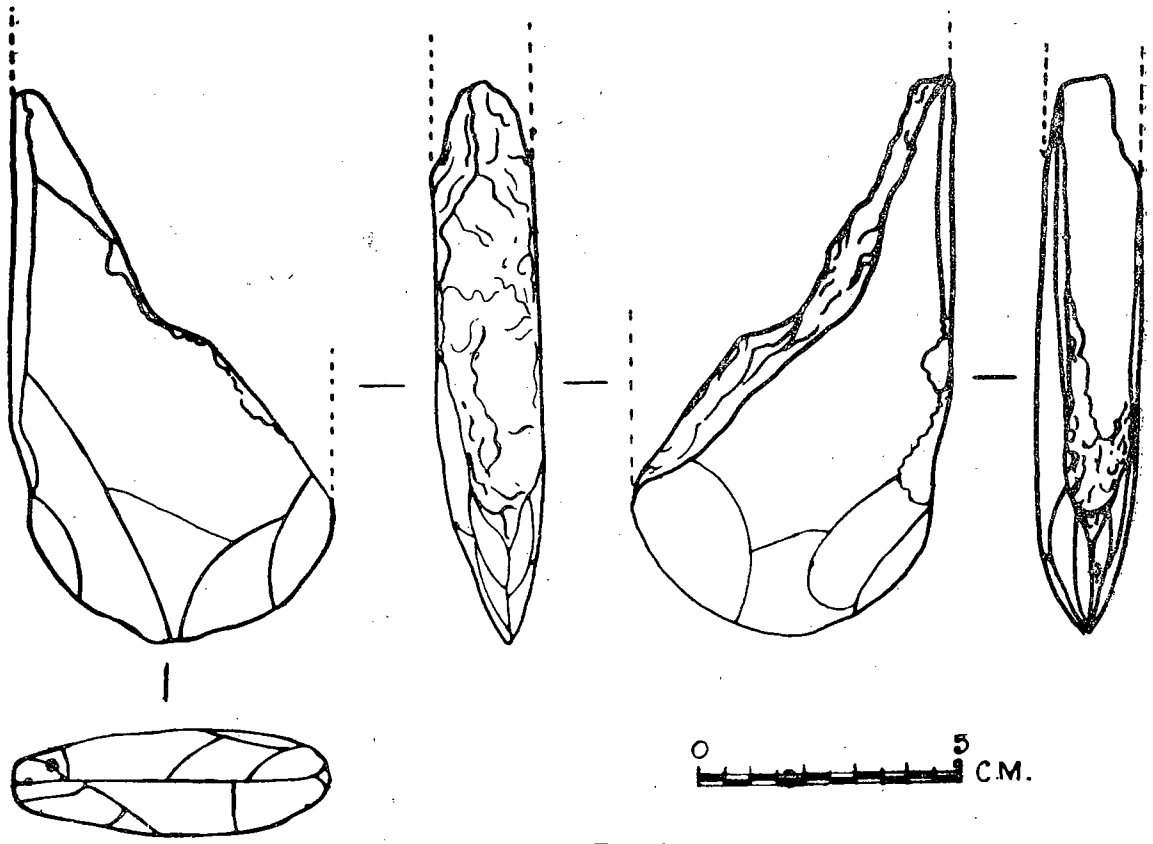
Charikot, an axe - Fig. 1



Charikot - Fig. 2

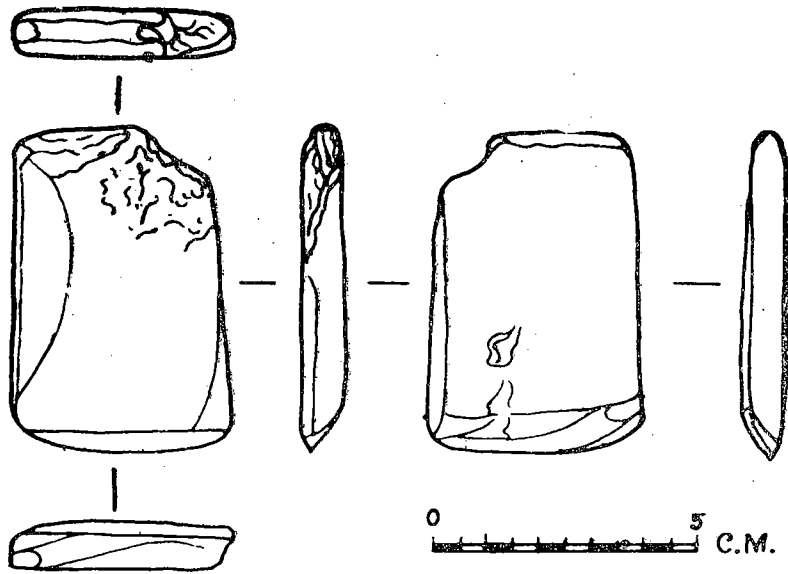


Charikot - Fig. 3

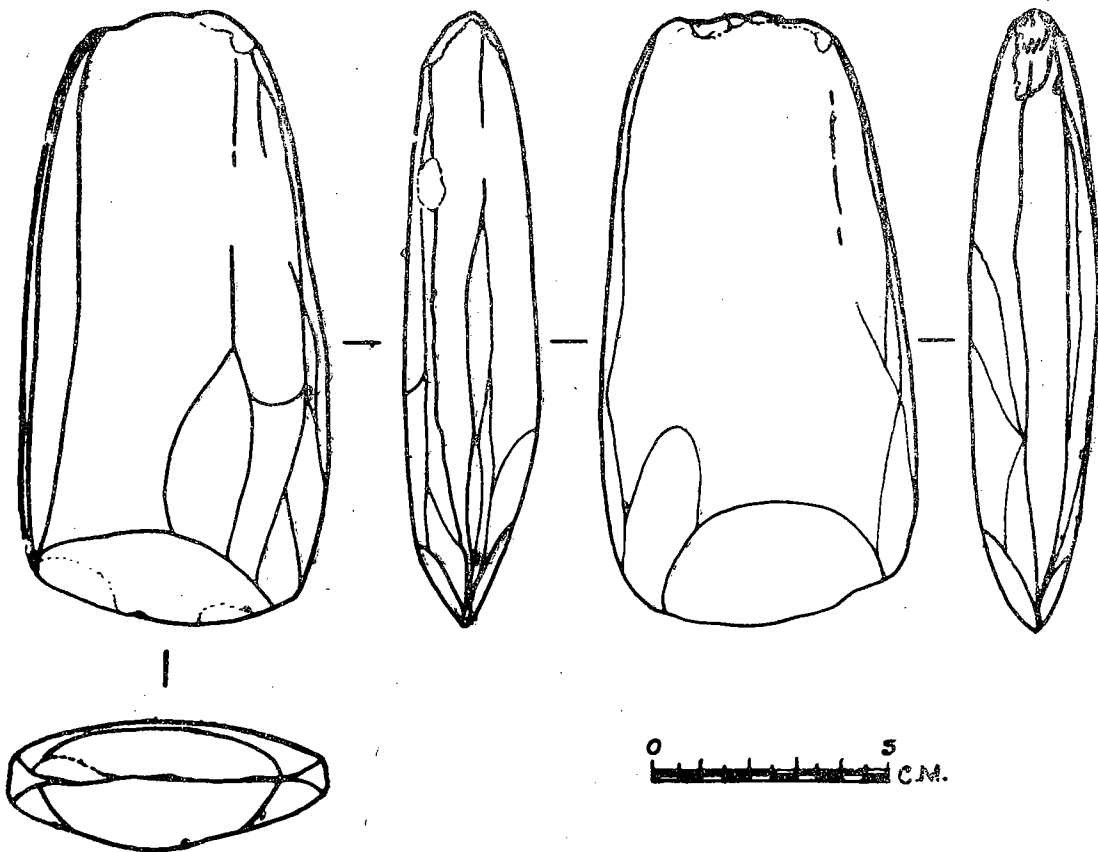


Charikot - Fig. 4

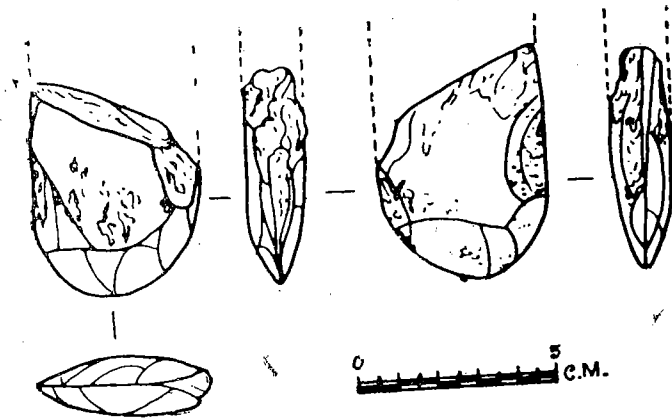




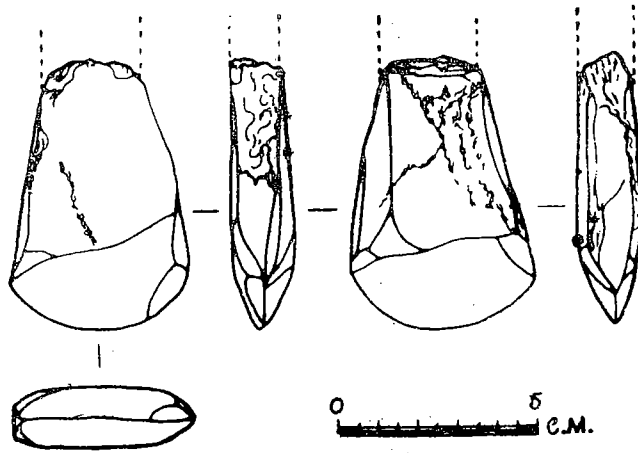
Charikot - Fig. 5



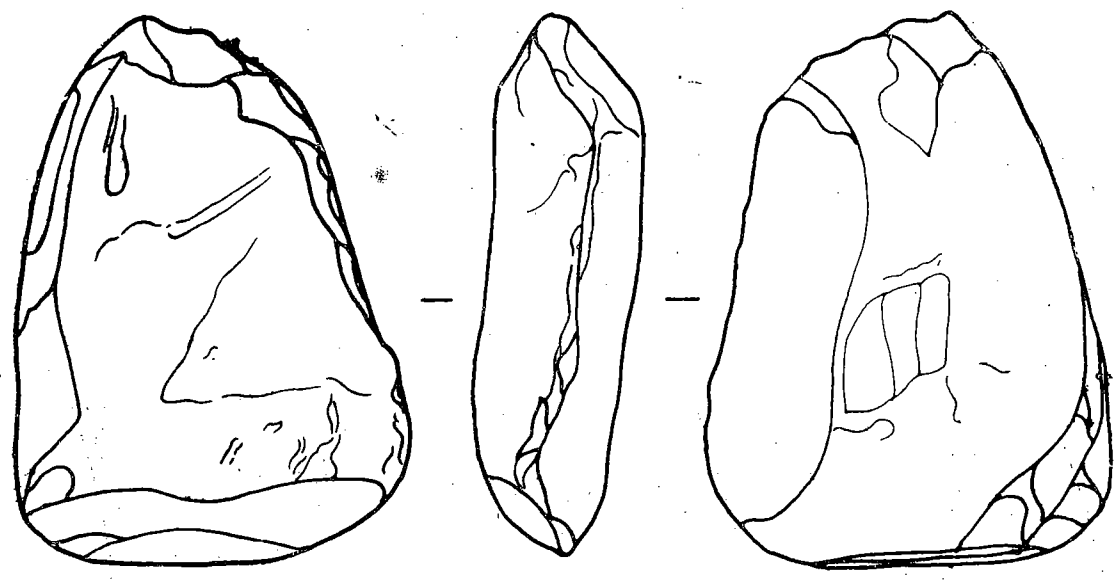
Charikot - Fig. 6



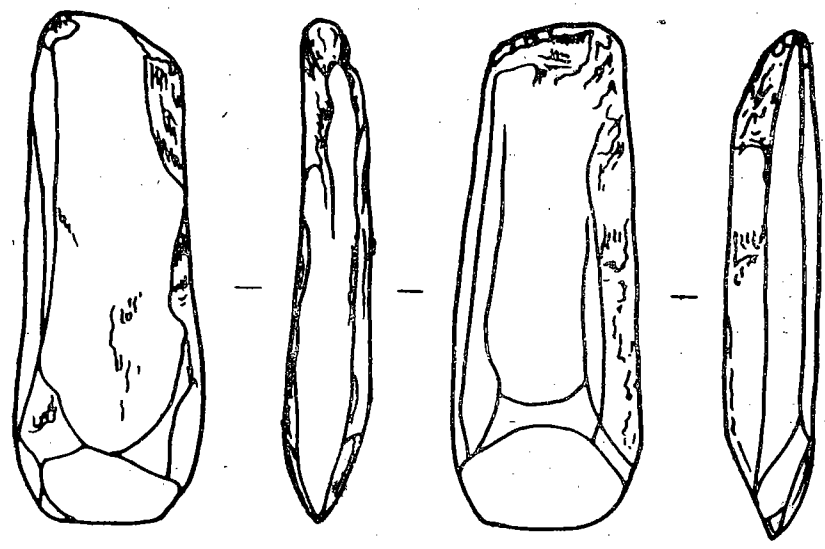
Charikot - Fig. 7



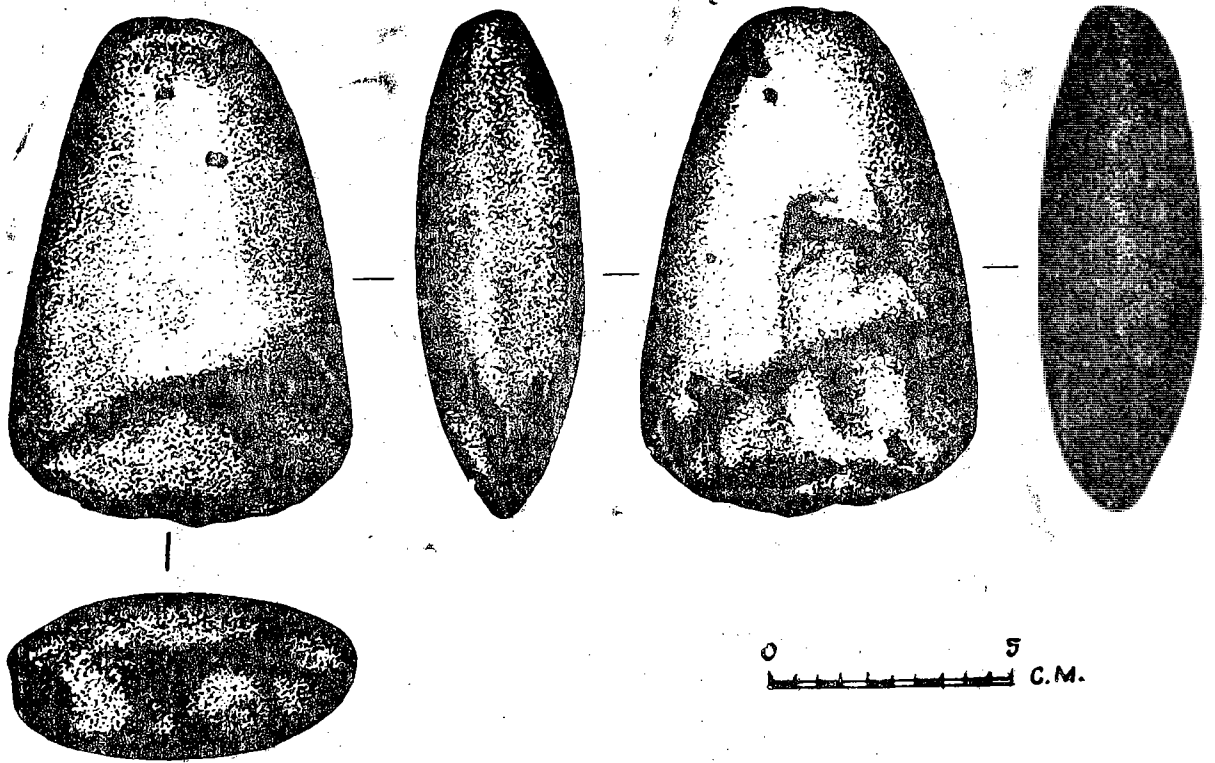
Jugugaon - Fig. 8



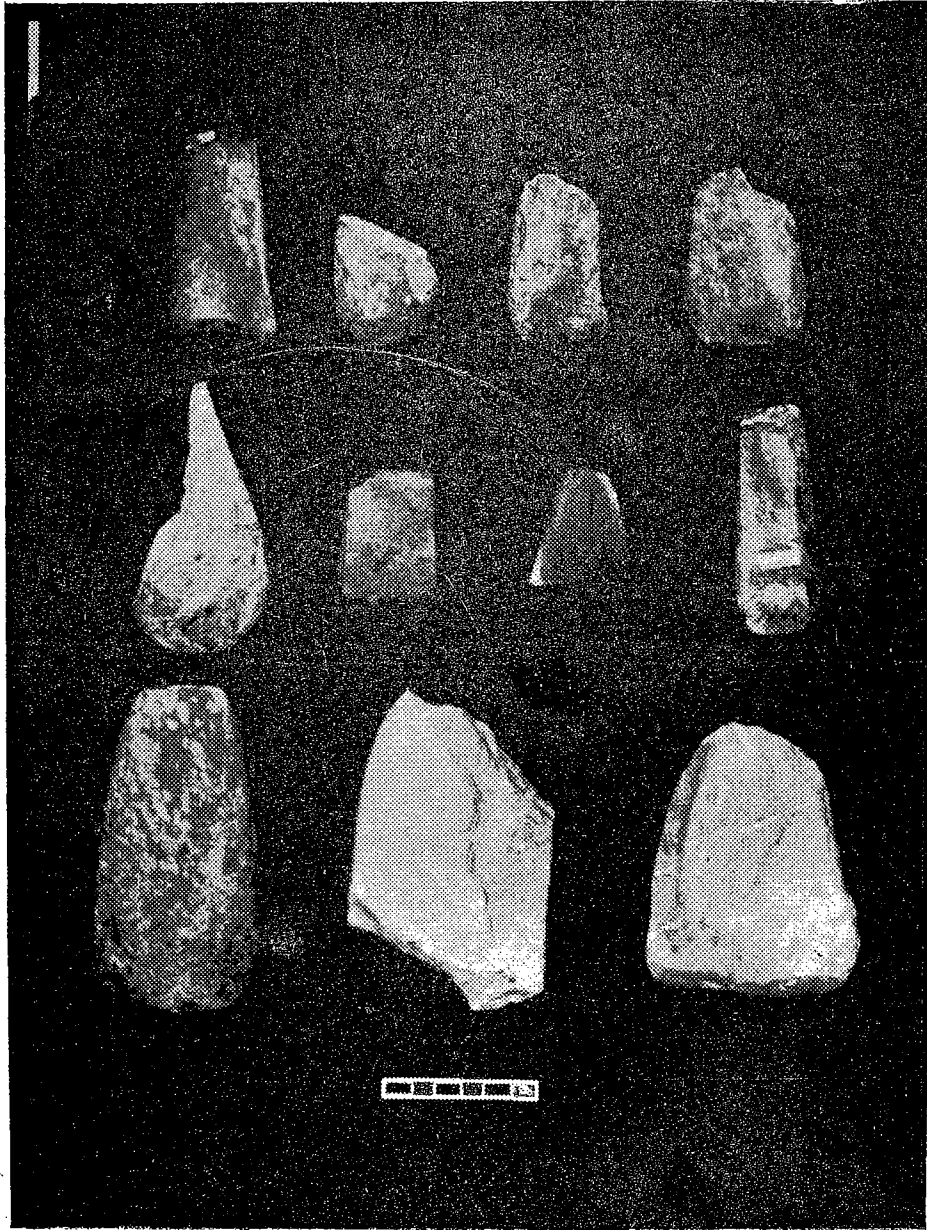
Lhubu (District-Lalitpur) - Fig. 9



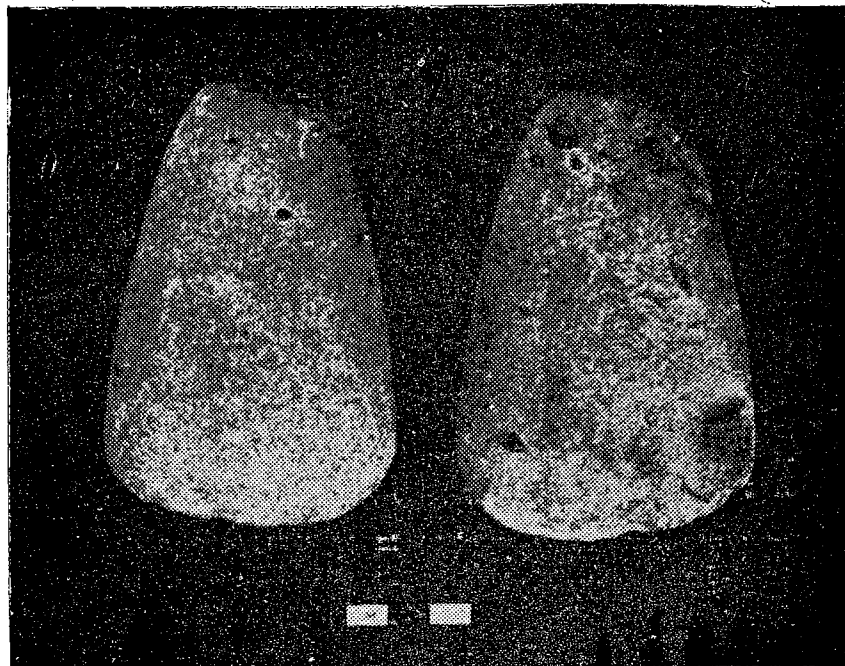
Northern Region - Fig. 10



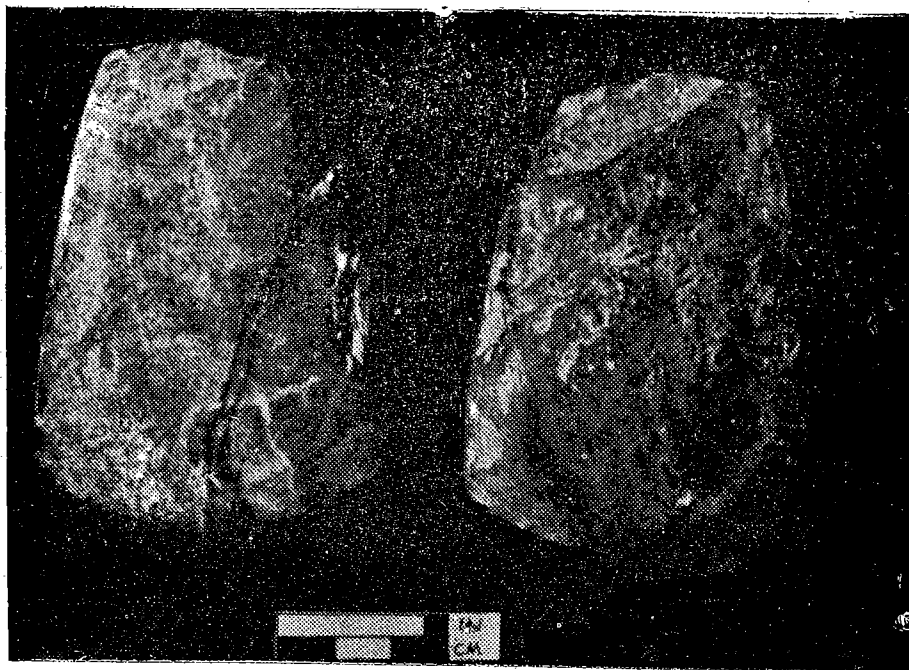
*Kottanri (District - Nawalparasi) - Fig. 11*



*Neolithic Tools from different places*



*Neolithic Tool from KOTTANRI, District- Nawalparasi,  
Lumbini Zone - Fig. 11*



*Neolithic Tool from Jhapa Baijanathpur, Morang,  
Koshi Zone - Fig. 13*