VI. Excavation X-11 (initial test pit from 2012), stratigraphic component C (SC-C; 3 artefacts, numbers 1140–1142)

VI.1. Taxa Dx & Ef: Flakes and blade-like flake (3 items; #1140–1142)

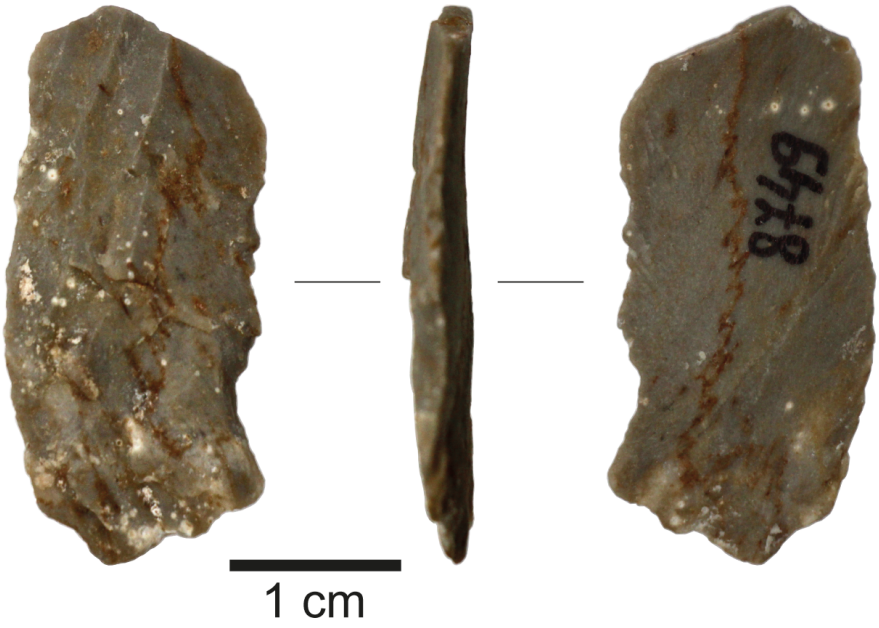
This chapter presents, once more, the three initial artefacts discovered in the very first test pit excavated at Chiquihuite Cave in January 2012, the three flakes (Flakes A, B and C) that started it all. They have already been reported and described elsewhere (Ardelean, 2013; Ardelean et al., 2019). Here, besides new photographs, their characterizations include new details and attributes, based on re-assessments and more thorough observations made under a fresher light. These pioneering artefacts could not have been left out of this catalogue. Without them ringing the alarm back in 2012, all the other human-made objects here included would have never been found.

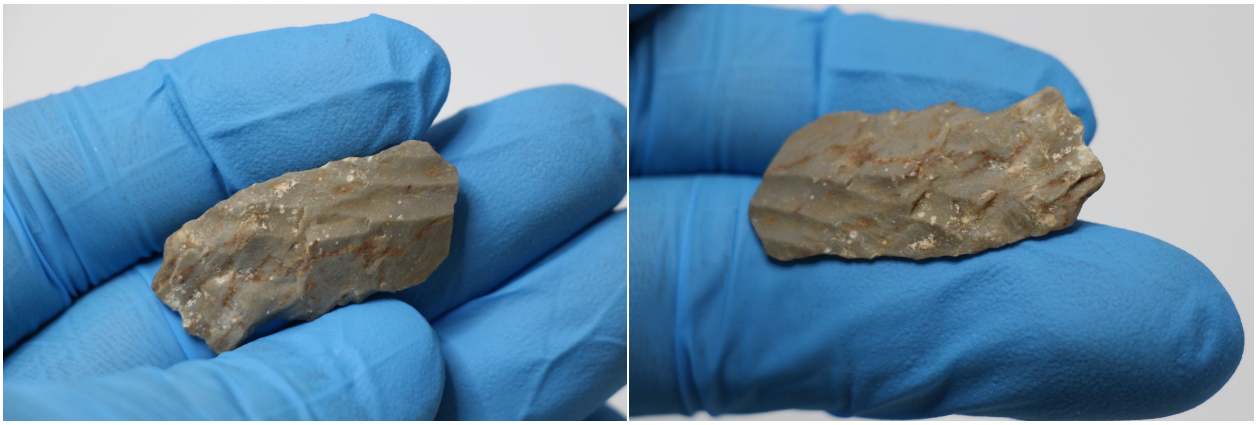
Note: Metric squares A4/B4 from test pit X11 in 2012 roughly correspond to squares K6/L6 in excavation X12 in 2016-2017. Stratigraphic unit 1109 from back then, considering the relative depth (-3.30 to -3.40 m) in relation to the cave's datum (same datum as for the subsequent excavations), indicates that the three original flakes were recovered from stratum 1223 (SC-C), therefore dating back to the onset of the Last Glacial Maximum or before. These three flakes have not been included in the general statistics of the excavated assemblage.

#1140. Flake A, item no. 8749

Exc. nr.	Discovery date	Square-subsq.	Depth range Z(D)	Depth Z(datum)	UTM E (x)	UTM N (y)	Stratum	Stratig. comp. (SC)
X11	12/01/2012	A4/B4	-3.30/ -3.40	-	—	—	unit 1109 (=1223)	C
Taxon code	Taxon definition	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	Thickness (mm)	Weight (g)	Raw material class		
Ef, F	Blade-like flake, used	32.7	15	3.5	1.98	V		

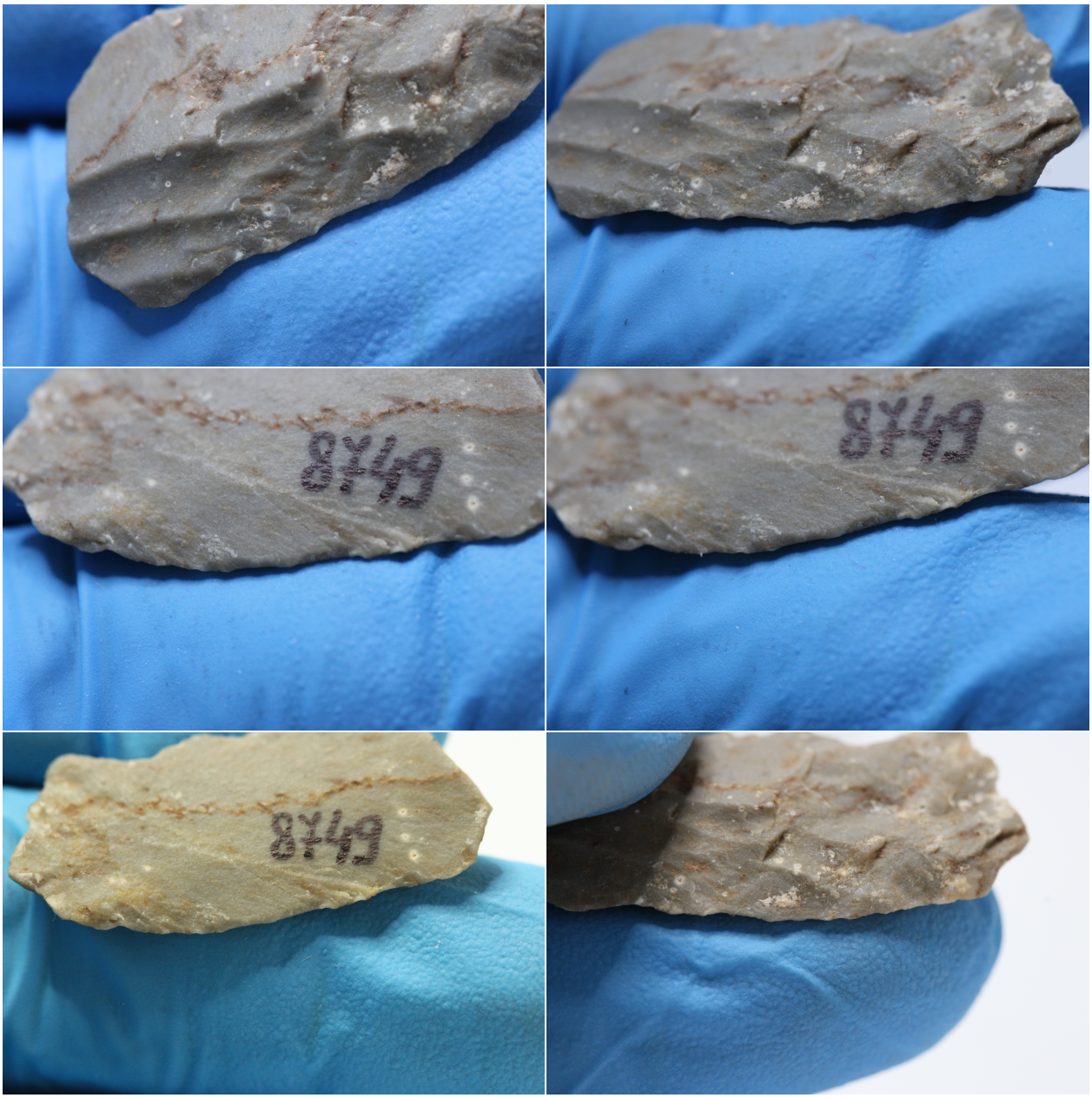
Characterization (modified from Ardelean, 2013: 612): This artefact is a thin, finely-made blade-like flake, a clearly intentional tertiary (thinning) debitage element. In shape and morphology, it presents a striking similarity to how a channel flake (or flute flake) would normally look like. However, this remark has only illustrative purposes. Made of fine-grained green limestone (with thin reddish veins), it shows certain degree of natural weathering on its surfaces. The artefact has a roughly rectangular shape, remarkably thin, with a flattened biconvex cross-section. The ventral face is almost flat, slightly convex, without post-extraction removals, while the decorticated dorsal side preserves impressions from previous flake extractions. The flake does not contain the platform anymore, but its original position on the piece remains evident, due to





the differential thickness between the two ends of the item, and due to the revealing morphology of the thin distal end. There are three long and narrow, parallel micro-blade scars clearly visible on the proximal-left corner of the artefact. The two larger ones (to the left) originate from the same direction as the flake that supports them; the third one, much smaller (to the right of the two) represents the end portion of a micro blade extraction that originates from opposite direction. In fact, small step fractures located on the medial portion of the dorsal face suggest the original core had been worked from two opposite directions. This artefact has the attributes of a tool-on-flake: both its longitudinal edges seem to have been modified by use-wear. The right edge presents a more serrated profile, with use-wear micro-scars forming over the dorsal side, yet marginal and fairly steep in relation to the dorso-ventral plane. The left edge is sharper and with more sinuous micro-wear, revealing more evident use-wear and micro-notching closer to the centre of the edge, in the form of steep, non-invasive micro-scars forming towards the ventral face. The morphology of these micro-features is consistent with modifications induced by the utilization of the blade-like flake as a cutting instrument. Under

this new evidence (not reported in the previous publications), it becomes highly significant that the very first lithic artefact discovered in stratified deposits at the site is, indeed, a tool-on-flake.



#1141. Flake B, item no. 8750

Exc. nr.	Discovery date	Square-subsq.	Depth range Z(D)	Depth Z(datum)	UTM E (x)	UTM N (y)	Stratum	Stratig. comp. (SC)
X11	12/01/2012	A4/B4	-3.30/ -3.40	-	—	—	1109 (=1223)	C

Taxon code	Taxon definition	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	Thickness (mm)	Weight (g)	Raw material class		
Dx	Flake with platform	44.2	39	8.2	10.63	V		

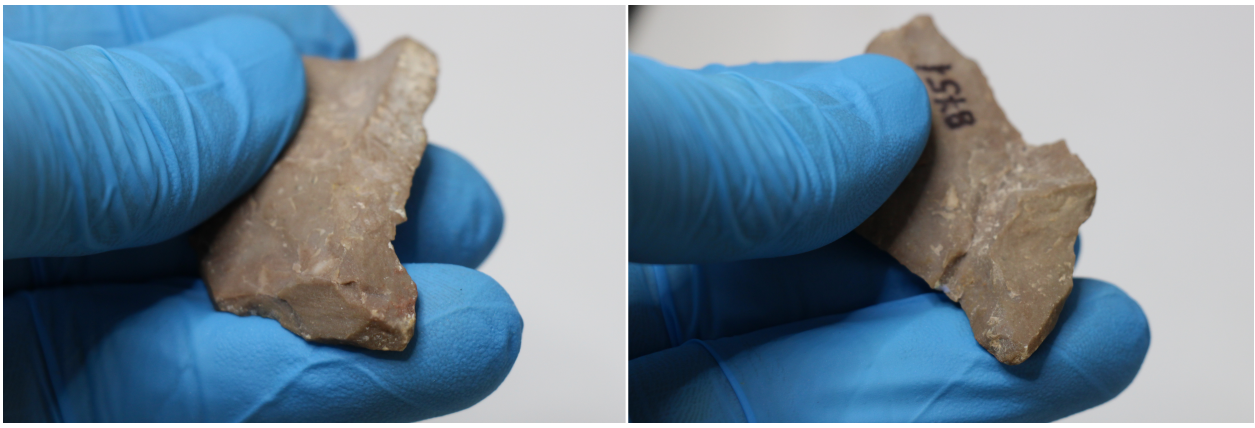
Characterization (modified from Ardelean, 2013: 612-613): This artefact is a tertiary flake, extracted from a relatively large tabular nodule of fine-grained green limestone, the same raw material with reddish intrusions as the previous item, so characteristic for the entire lithic assemblage at the cave. It has an almost triangular shape. Most of its proximal-right sector is defined by the deep scar of a previous extraction. Carbonate concretions had formed on the piece since before this extraction, still preserved on the distal sector of the artefact. The narrow flat portion located along the entire left margin of the item is probably reminiscent of a natural cleavage plane that had formed on the parent nodule before the extraction of the flake. The item is curved over its ventral side, which is slightly irregular and weathered, but without post-extraction

modifications. One small flake removal visible on this face is recent. The flake appears like having two platforms, an aspect caused by it being a technical *outrepassé* flake: the smaller platform-like extremity is a fragment of the parent core removed from an edge opposite to the platform. The actual platform of the flake is the larger one: a heavy dihedral platform that appears to be cortical. A shallow impact bulb is perceptible on the corresponding end of the ventral side. The flake lacks evidence of having been employed as a tool, remaining classified only as a debitage element.

#1142. Flake C, item no. 8751

Exc. nr.	Discovery date	Square-subsq.	Depth range Z(D)	Depth Z(datum)	UTM E (x)	UTM N (y)	Stratum	Stratig. comp. (SC)
X11	12/01/2012	A4/B4	-3.30/ -3.40	-	—	—	unit 1109 (=1223)	C
Taxon code	Taxon definition	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	Thickness (mm)	Weight (g)	Raw material class		
Dx	Flake with platform	47.6	27.7	5.9	7.06	V		

Characterization (modified from Ardelean, 2013: 613): This artefact is an apparently secondary flake, and the less remarkable of the three, in terms of morphological attributes, apart from its prominent, outstanding platform located at the pointy proximal end. The raw material is the same, but both faces of this item are more heavily affected by environmental chemical weathering acquired inside its depositional context. The micro-topography of the two sides is also much more irregular. The flake is slightly curved over its ventral face, and it has a heavy and complexly prepared platform: faceted, apparently isolated, and ground. On the dorsal side,



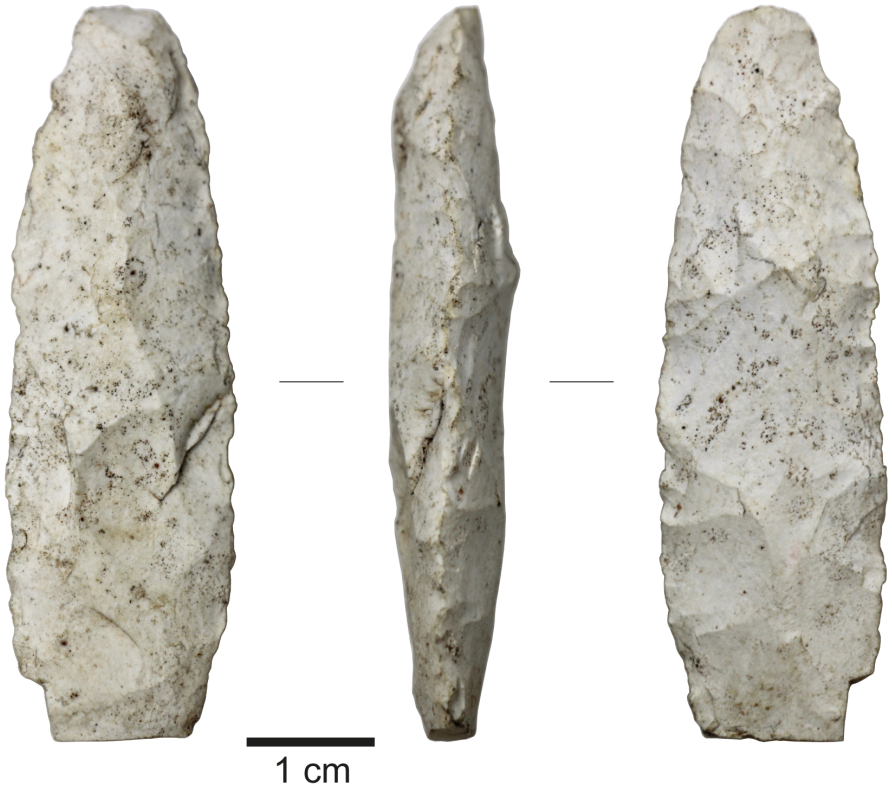
it presents almost the same pattern as on Flake B: two flake scars intersecting with a flat, beveled surface, probably coming from a natural feature on the parent nodule. The flake lacks compelling evidence in favor of its functionality as a tool. Two portions of the right, angular edge seem to reveal certain degree of wear in the form of micro-scars and micro-serrations, but those features are rather the result of natural trimming of the sharper margin of the flake.

VII. Surface find from the slope outside the cave (1 artefact, number 1143)

VII.1. Taxon Hk: bifacial point (1 item; #1143)

The single artefact included in this chapter is the remarkable and intriguing bifacial projectile point discovered on the rocky slope in front of the cave (GPS locality 0828) in January 2011, at the beginning of the preliminary (mapping) field season, one year before the start of any excavation at the site. The find has already been reported and described elsewhere (Ardelean, 2013; Ardelean et al., 2019). Being a surface find, without related contextual information, the chronology of this important artefact cannot be established. Yet, its discovery was the original argument for planning excavations at the cave in the following years. Its typology and technology may provide clues about another group of ancient visitors at the site.

#1143. Point, item no. L0828-5603



Exc. nr.	Discovery date	Square-subsq.	Depth range Z(D)	Depth Z(datum)	UTM E (x)	UTM N (y)	Stratum	Stratig. comp. (SC)
Surface L0828	07/01/2011	—	—	-	283853.01	2724452.00	—	—

Taxon code	Taxon definition	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	Thickness (mm)	Weight (g)	Raw material class		
Hk	Bifacial point	57.6	17.8	10.5	10.09	white chert		

Characterization (modified from Ardelean, 2013: 611): This projectile point is a narrow and long biface of biconvex cross-section, made by percussion on a thick blank of white chert, with a limited use of pressure retouch along the edges. It has an elongation index of 3.21 (=elongated), and a flatness ratio of 1.71 (=flat). The projectile point seems to have broken while attached to a shaft, as suggested by the stepped bending fracture that severed the proximal tip. The distal tip is also missing (although, seemingly, only the last few mm), probably due to a function-related impact. The distal fracture is clearly ancient, judging by the natural wear formed on its edges and the patina build-up. The shape of the point (in its original form) presents good symmetry, in both lateral and dorso-ventral axis. The proximal fracture does not help in reconstructing its original shape, but, as suggested by the morphological values and the direction of the edges, it

is very probable that this was a bi-pointed biface. The longitudinal ridges on the two faces rise tall over the medial plane, and the bi-convex cross-section is almost diamond-shaped. On both faces, there are small stacks that could not be removed during the manufacture process. Pressure-flaking retouch is evident along the edges, but not continuous. In terms of typology, strictly referring to the shape and morphology of the piece, this point very much resembles the Nebo Hill points in Missouri (U.S.A., Archaic), but also the *Joboid* older-than-Clovis points ("El Jobo" and "Monte Verde" types) in South America.

C. F. A.

Zacatecas, ZAC., Mexico

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1302