

The Breckenridge Harahey Burial Cache

A Cache of Bifaces from a Native American Burial in San Saba County, Texas

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Introduction

This article puts on record six chert bifaces found in a cache in a burial feature within a burned rock midden from a site in San Saba County, Texas. The only available provenience information on the cache is that they were recovered more than 25 years ago in a burial in a midden deposit. The bifaces were not stacked, but partially overlapping and scattered in space across a 1 foot square area.

Figure 1
Texas County Map



Biface Descriptions

The six bifaces in the cache are numbered from #1 to #6. Table 1 provides relevant measurements of the maximum length, width, thickness, and extent of re-sharpening (if present) for each biface. Five of the bifaces respond to UV light in a very dark shade of orange, a characteristic the senior author has noticed in some gravels obtained from the Colorado River. Biface #6, white areas appeared white under UV light, and dark areas were dark to non-reflective.

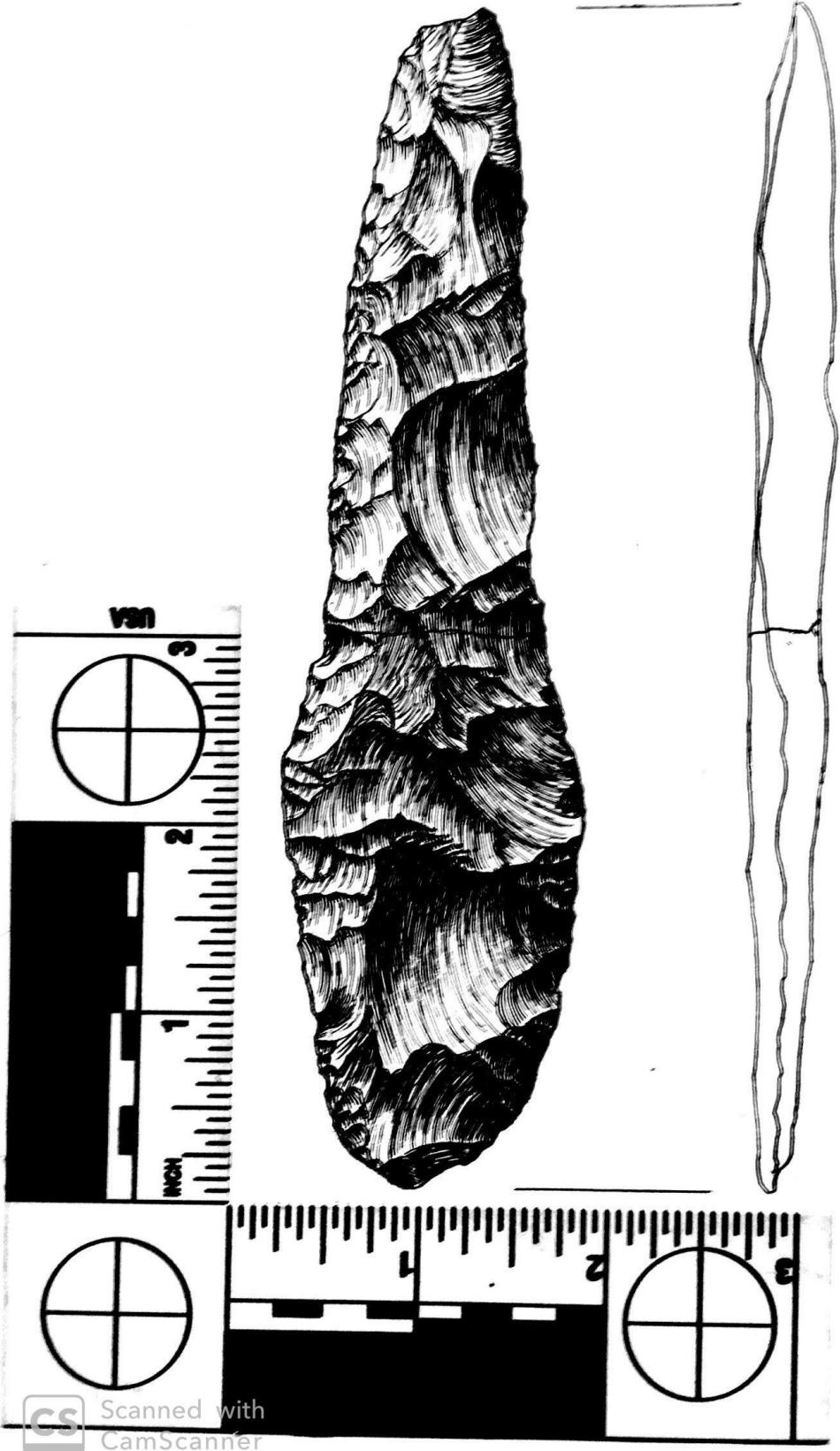
Table 1. Biface Measurements (in mm).

Biface No.	Max. Length	Max. Width	Thickness	Extent of Re-sharpening
#1	159.32	40.72	6.86-10.66	100.74
#2	130.43	39.86	10.14	78.65-80.9
#3	149.60	58.31	9.62	-
#4	153.92	58.89	9.17	-
#5	142.42	63.72	8.36-10.29	-
#6	126.82	54.77	13.17	-

#1

This biface is made from a tan piece of Edwards Formation chert with random black specks. It has been alternatively beveled along much of both edges of the artifact blade, with remnants of large percussion flakes still remaining despite extensive re-sharpening (Figure 1). Turner et al. (2011:223) refer to this biface form as a two-beveled biface. The tip has been broken by a bending break which may have been created by the twisting of the biface in cutting activities. Biface #1 likely represents an almost completely exhausted two-beveled knife. The biface is broken by a bending break at a point where the lateral edges narrow. Break pressure was applied directly to the surface illustrated.

Figure 2. Biface #1.

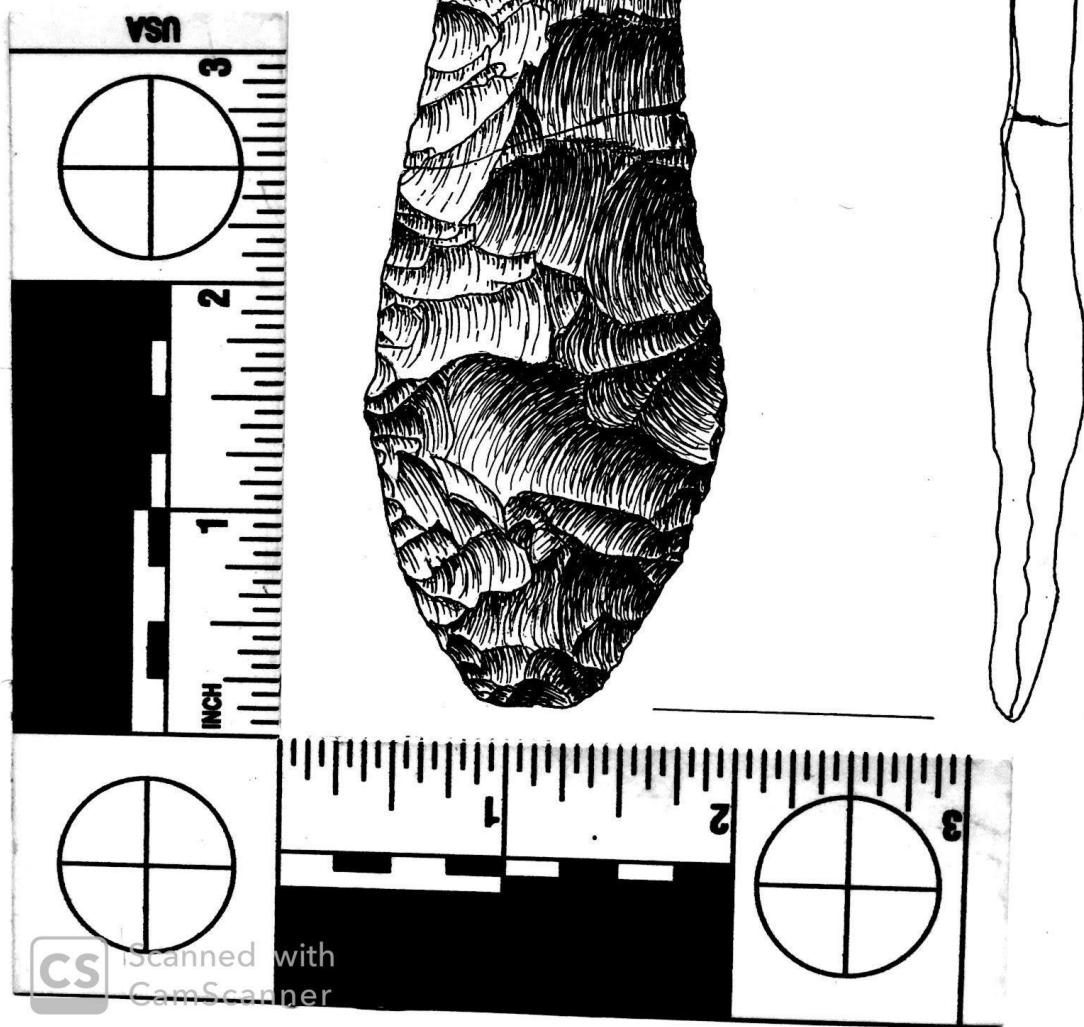


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#2

The second biface is made of brown Edwards Formation chert with white inclusions. This biface is also a two-beveled form. Specimen exhibits advanced alternate beveled re-sharpening . Alternately beveled lateral edges exhibit a use wear polish (Figure 2). Biface #2 was formed through percussion flaking. The tip of the biface has been broken and the biface was broken near mid-point by pressure applied directly to the biface from the illustrated surface.

Figure 3. Biface #2.



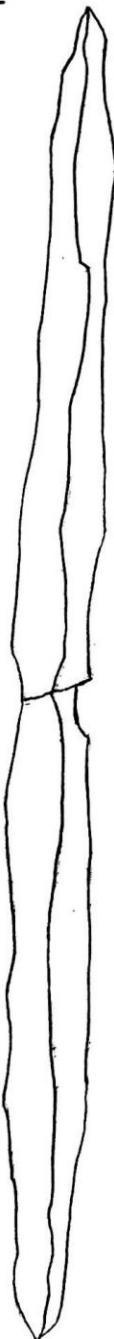
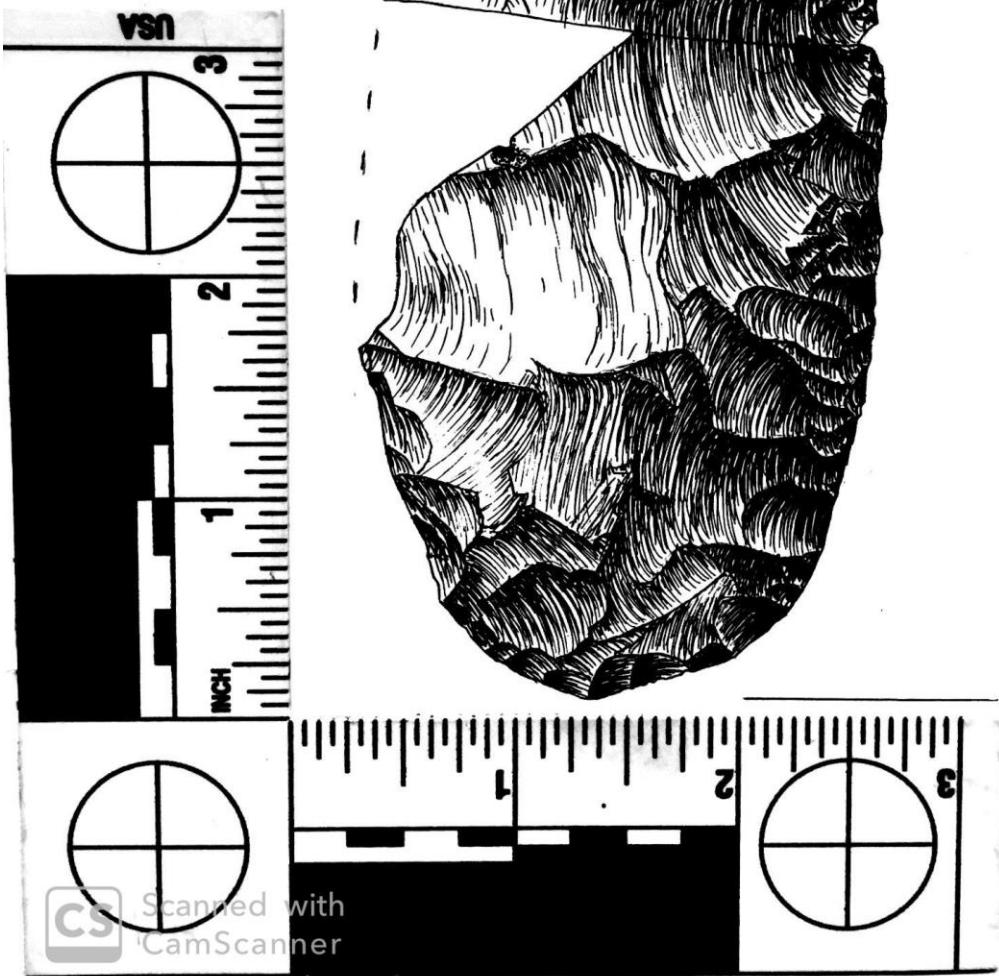
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#3

Biface #3 is an almost finished ovate biface shaped by percussion (Figure 3); the negative bulbs of percussion are very shallow, which may indicate that soft hammer percussion was used in knapping the piece. This biface is made from a creamy off-white to tan Edwards Formation chert, and it has been broken along two edges. Some percussion flake platform remnants do not have the deltas trimmed off suggesting this specimen was not quite finished. Specimen was broken near mid-point by pressure applied directly to the illustrated surface.

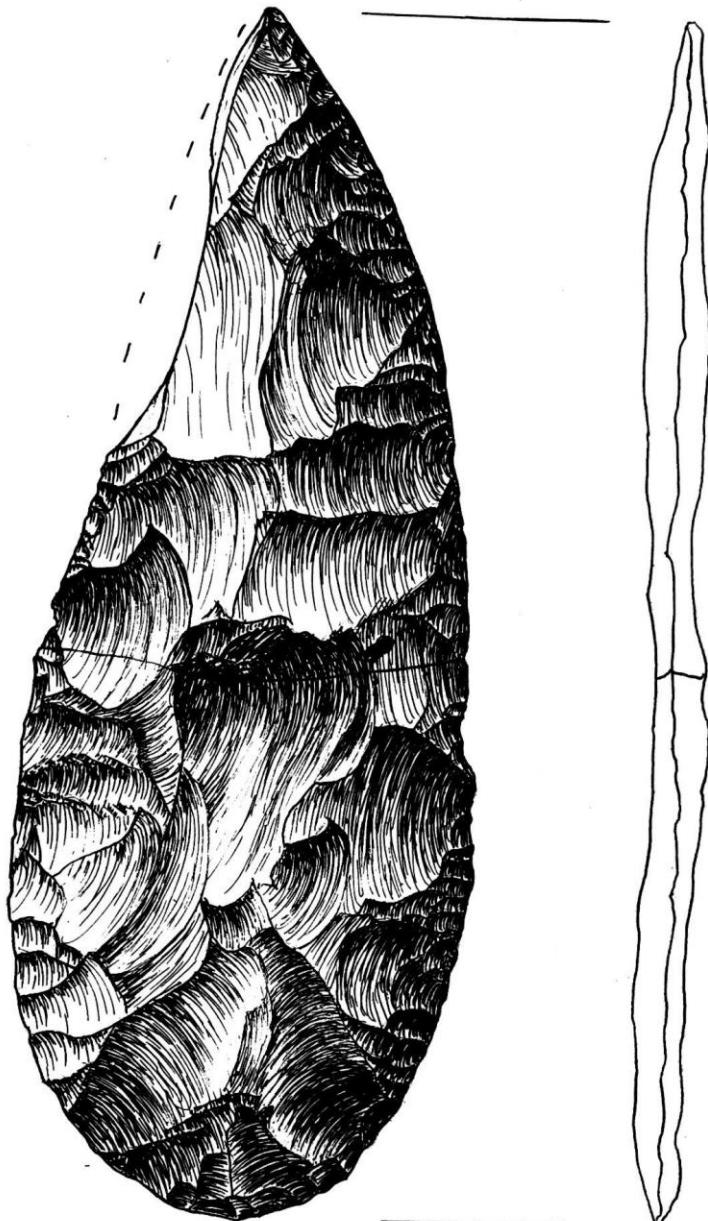
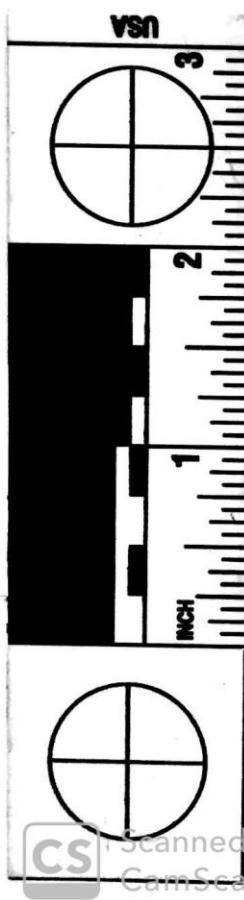
Figure 4. Biface #3.



#4

This ovate biface was shaped by soft hammer percussion, given the shallow bulbs of percussion (Figure 4). There is a missing distal section of the biface that may be a manufacturing error that was to be corrected during the last stage of sharpening. Biface #3 is made from a high-quality Georgetown chert. Some platform deltas have not been trimmed away, suggesting this specimen was not quite finished. Lateral edges beveling to re-sharpen had not yet begun. Specimen was broken near mid-point by pressure applied directly to illustrated surface.

Figure 5. Biface #4.



#5

Biface #5 is also ovate-shaped, and nearly finished, with shallow negative bulbs of percussion from soft hammer flaking (Figure 5); there is no evidence that the biface was used before it was placed in the cache. Some platform deltas have not been trimmed away suggesting this specimen was not quite finished. The biface is made from a creamy off-white Edwards Formation chert very similar to the material used to knap Biface #3. The specimen was broken near mid-point by pressure applied directly to the illustrated surface.

Figure 6. Biface #5.



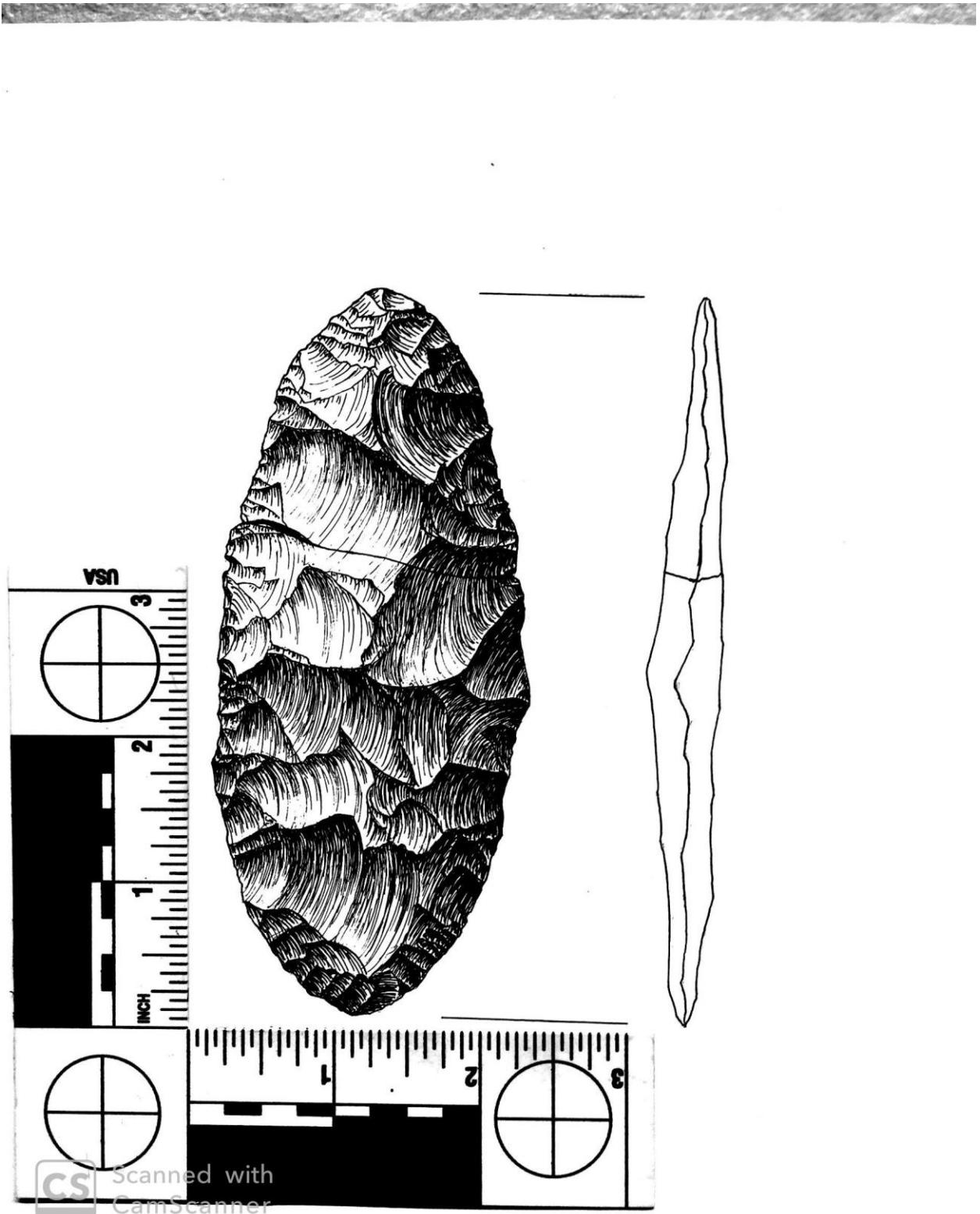
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#6

The sixth and last biface in the cache is another ovate-shaped form without any alternate beveling (Figure 6). It is made from a brown and white Edwards Formation chert with some black speckling. This specimen exhibits untrimmed deltas suggesting it was not quite finished. No alternate beveling re-sharpening has been done to lateral edges. The biface was knapped using percussion flaking. This specimen was broken by pressure applied directly to the illustrated surface.

Figure 7. Biface #6.



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Summary and Conclusions

Excavations more than 25 years at a currently unrecorded site in San Saba County, Texas recovered a cache of six bifaces made of Edwards Formation chert from a burial feature. All specimens were broken by direct pressure applied near the specimens mid-point. Since these specimens were burial inclusions and all were broken, it is possible all specimens were ‘killed’. Burial inclusions suggest a possible belief in an afterlife and the possible “killing” of these bifaces suggest a spiritual component of sorts. Two of the bifaces are two-beveled forms, and the other four are non-beveled ovate-shaped bifaces. The two two-beveled biface forms in the cache suggest the cache dates to the Toyah phase (ca. A.D. 1300-1700, see Kenmotsu and Boyd 2012:10); these tools were likely associated with the processing of bison remains (Turner et al. 2011:222).

Acknowledgements

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