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"PORTRAITS" OF BIFACES. SURFICIAL FINDINGS FROM THE PALAEOLITHIC TOOL-MAKING WORKSHOPS OF NEA ARTAKI (EUBOEA, GREECE)

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ABSTRACT. Along the widespread flint rocks of Nea Artaki, Euboea (Evia), in the years 1977-1978 I detected open sites with rock processing residues for the construction of Palaeolithic tools, whereas evidence of settlements with thousands of tools were found in the coastal area. Nea Artaki used to be a major attracting pole for hunters and nomads, mainly for the construction of stone tools, from the Lower Palaeolithic to Chalcolithic period. The area has been declared an archeological site since 1985, but its prehistoric site was largely destroyed after the settlement expanded over the few years. Amongst the numerous stone tools I saved, a diversity of handaxes, cleavers, clactonian flakes etc. presented herein, are in consistency with the standards of the Lower Palaeolithic period.

The scarcity of Palaeolithic quarry sites in Greece, the density, the number, the variety of artifacts from different periods, their extent on the ground surface, as well as the specificity of the composition of the locally available flints – which are being eliminated following their use as building materials at present – shall indicate the urgency for the effective protection of communal sites and one of the most significant open palaeolithic sites in Greece.

KEY WORDS: Quarry site, workshop, core, Lower Palaeolithic, flint, handaxe, cleaver, clactonian, Prehistory.

1. INTRODUCTION

In September 1977, in the coastal district of Nea Artaki, I observed thousands of stone palaeolithic tools nearly over the whole soil surface, covering an area of 2 km for about 800 m. (Sarantea 1986, 86-88). Until 1977 on the island of Euboea, the palaeolithic traces were considered "sporadic and undefined" (Sampson 1977, 5). A few months later,

along the widespread flint rocks of Faneromeni and Voleri in Nea Artaki - lying a kilometer apart - I located open sites of this particularly hard rock exploitation, for palaeolithic stone tool-making dating back to different periods (Sarantea 1986, 18-38). I found plenty of their processing residues (such as cores, incomplete efforts, fragments and hammerstones, as well as intact tools of nomads and hunters who had settled thereabouts (Matzanas 2009, 789).

The reddish/purple-brown solid siliceous rocks at Nea Artaki used to be an important locus, mainly during the Middle and Lower Palaeolithic period, for hunters and nomads to construct tools (figs 1, 4). The area of findings at Nea Artaki is composed of low stony hills with sharpless elevations (Fig. 2). Therefore, the palaeolithic findings had not been significantly displaced from their original site and a major part of them remained on the soil surface or at a relatively shallow depth. During the 80s, I surveyed every autumn new findings coming up to the surface of certain fields after plowing.

This was followed by the discovery of another area, at a distance of 15 km northeast of Nea Artaki, with remnants of the construction of flint (silcret) palaeolithic tools at Makrykapa district, Municipality of Messapia, especially at the location of Eftakonaka cave (Sarantea E. 1985, 81-85). Afterwards, I detected other palaeolithic sites or isolated traces in Central Euboea (Sarantea E. 1986, 12-14).

FIG. 1. View of palaeolithic stone tool-making workshop. South "Madri" location, Faneromeni, 1995 (Photo by G. Michas).

2. NEA ARTAKI. Locus of activities of palaeolithic hunters and nomads for long-term periods

The "palimpsest" of the stone tools of hundred prehistoric generations, on the soil surface of Nea Artaki, reveals the following:

1) The widespread solid flint (silcrete) rocks at Voleri and Faneromeni, were attracting poles for palaeolithic hunters and nomads of the Lower and mainly of Middle Palaeolithic period, used as quarry sites and workshops for stone tool-making from this rock. The areas nearby had also been places of settlement (Sarantea 1986, 18-38. Collina-Girard 1995, autopsy. Matzanas 2009, 789-791). Towards the end of the Middle Palaeolithic, nomads seasonally settled at limestone coastline areas, were using even modestly the small-sized black flint nodules enclosed in cretaceous limestones to make tools (Sarantea 1986, 36-37).

2) The surficial lithic tools are dated *"... to different periods, from the lower palaeolithic to chalkolithic-period"* (Darlas autopsy 2-8-1990. Darlas 1994, 307, 311). The diversity of bifaces indicates the use of the site within different phases of the Lower Palaeolithic. The area falls within the few Greek open sites with evidenced activity from the Lower Palaeolithic (over 120.000 years old).

3) Nea Artaki was an area where - by reference to handicrafts – had acted hominine species, such as *homo sapiens sapiens, homo sapiens neanderthalensis,* and probably the elder *homo heidelbergensis, homo erectus or others*.

4) The cores of Middle Palaeolithic (120.000-35.000 years ago) are remarkably large in size *"and this differentiates them from the known tool sets of the same period in Greece*", according to A. Moundrea-Agrafioti (autopsy report no 175/12-3-1985).

5) The number of tools on the ground was noteworthy. According to A. Sampson: *"The grand concentration of observed at N. Artaki is a rare occurrence for Central Greece"* (Sampson 1996, 56). A. Darlas shall mention *"numerous stone tools"* (autopsy report 2-8-1990).

6) The surficial palaeolithic findings occupied a large area of 2 km for at least 800 m. (fig. 2). Another part thereof must had been destroyed by the first settlement of Nea Artaki in 1922, whereas tools are widespread up to Manika settlement (Sarantea 1986, 21, 38). Another part has been probably covered by seawater, after melting of ice. Was there another flint locus for tool-making in the North Euboean Gulf, in the area currently submerged in seawater? (Knowing the existence of stone tools exist among nickeliferous flints in the opposite coast of Larymna, Prefecture of Fthiotida).

7) Due to their geological connection with the nickeliferous mineral (which in Europe is found only in a few places in the Southern Balkans), the locally available flints and certainly the tools made from this material

a) are distinguished from differently generated flints of other regions, from the petrographical point of view, and

b) are differentiated from place to place, by SiO_2 content, color, material homogeneity, schistosity, etc. Coarse-grained materials were probably preferable for the construction of massive tools. As per their contact with ferronikel mineral the flints were mostly unsuitable for tool-making. The most homogeneous siliceous material was mainly used during the Middle Palaeolithic. Such a material existed in abundance in the center of Voleri, where the utmost concentration of findings has been found (fig. 2).

8) In addition to the presence of flints, the water supply in the area must also have been a reason for activities, as a source of life and hunting (fig. 29), as implied by the adjacent Wetland between Nea Artaki-Psachna, the occasional overflow of local wells and trails of swampland in the area of Gipedo/Field (not farther than 300 m. from the traces of workshops at Faneromeni and installation sites) (Sarantea E., 1986, 38-39). Moreover, the thousands of minor surficial stone tools on the rocky shores, dating to the Late Middle and Early Upper Palaeolithic period, are indicative of running water in areas currently covered by seawater and had been likely inhabited.

When did hominids reach the area of Nea Artaki for the first time? Specimens representing activities of even earliest hominine species that lived in Greece are likely found in tool-making sites, given that the rich sources of raw materials might have been fixed-based stations. Were the eldest artifacts saved amongst those collected? Are they on the ground, in deeper layers? How many stone tools were there in soil (the rescue concerned solely surficial findings). How many tools or flakes from those produced in the workshops did the prehistorians take with them, leaving for other places? How many stone remains from the seasonal nomadic settlement have been covered by water, after the ice melting and the sea-level rise in this coastal area? How many were lost due to the expansion of the city?… We did rescue but a small part out of the huge number of stone artifacts in the area.

In 1985, the area of Nea Artaki was declared an archeological site *"for reasons of protection mainly of prehistoric sites"* (Government Gazette 209/B/18-4-1985).

However, in 1993 was announced the district inclusion in the urban planning zone. The extremely rapid expansion of the city of Nea Artaki, the richest Euboean region in palaeolithic articrafts, wiped off the ancient prehistoric site, which had remained the same like thousands of years ago. It has been shattered, nearly after its *revelation*. Public areas, which should have been archaeological parks, with prospect for archaeological excavation sites, were demolished. Nowadays, have hardly any site-parts remained as they stood, being further under imminent threat, although they are lying within the declared archeological site.

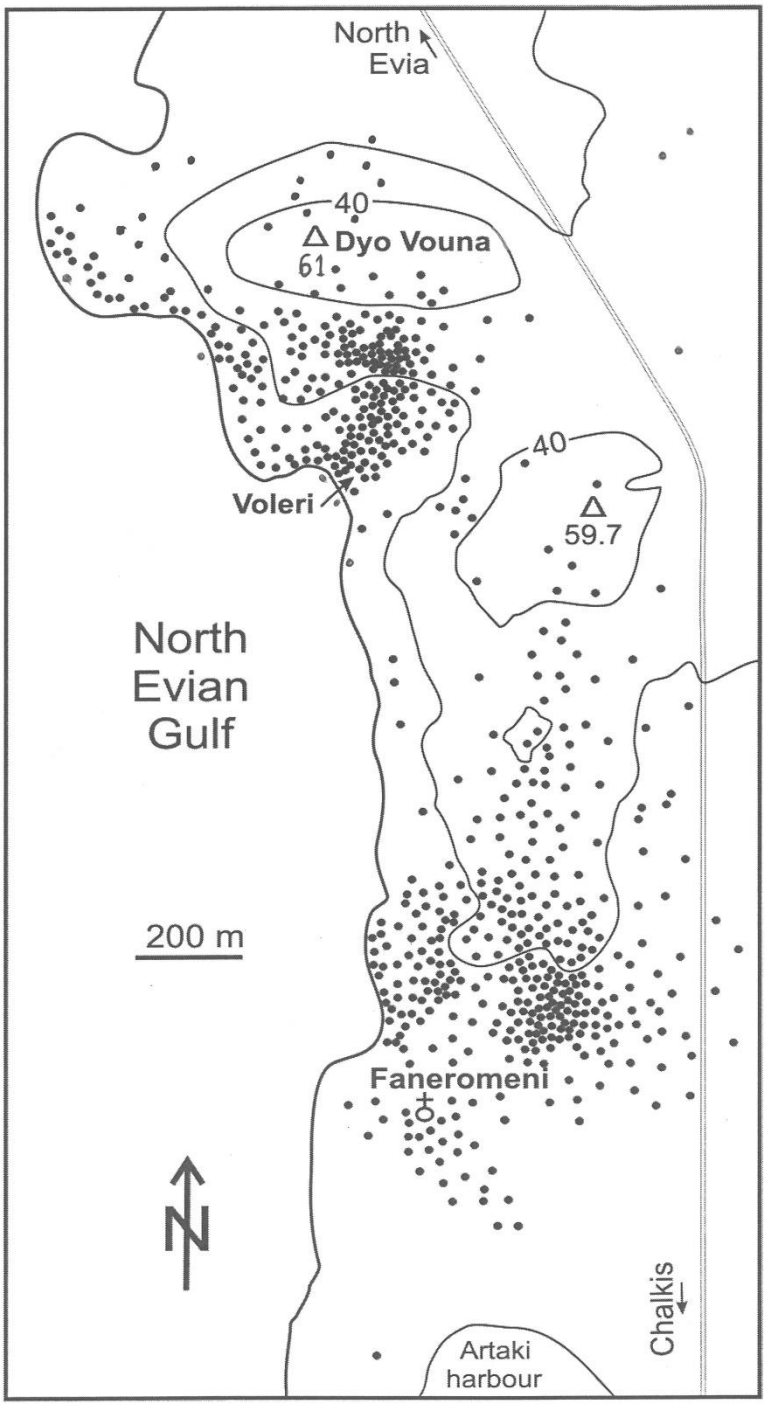

FIG. 2. Map of concentrations of stone palaeolithic artifacts on the ground surface of the area of Nea Artaki (1977-1981). The findings are concentrated in siliceous rocky locations, stone cutting sites and stone tool-making workshops.

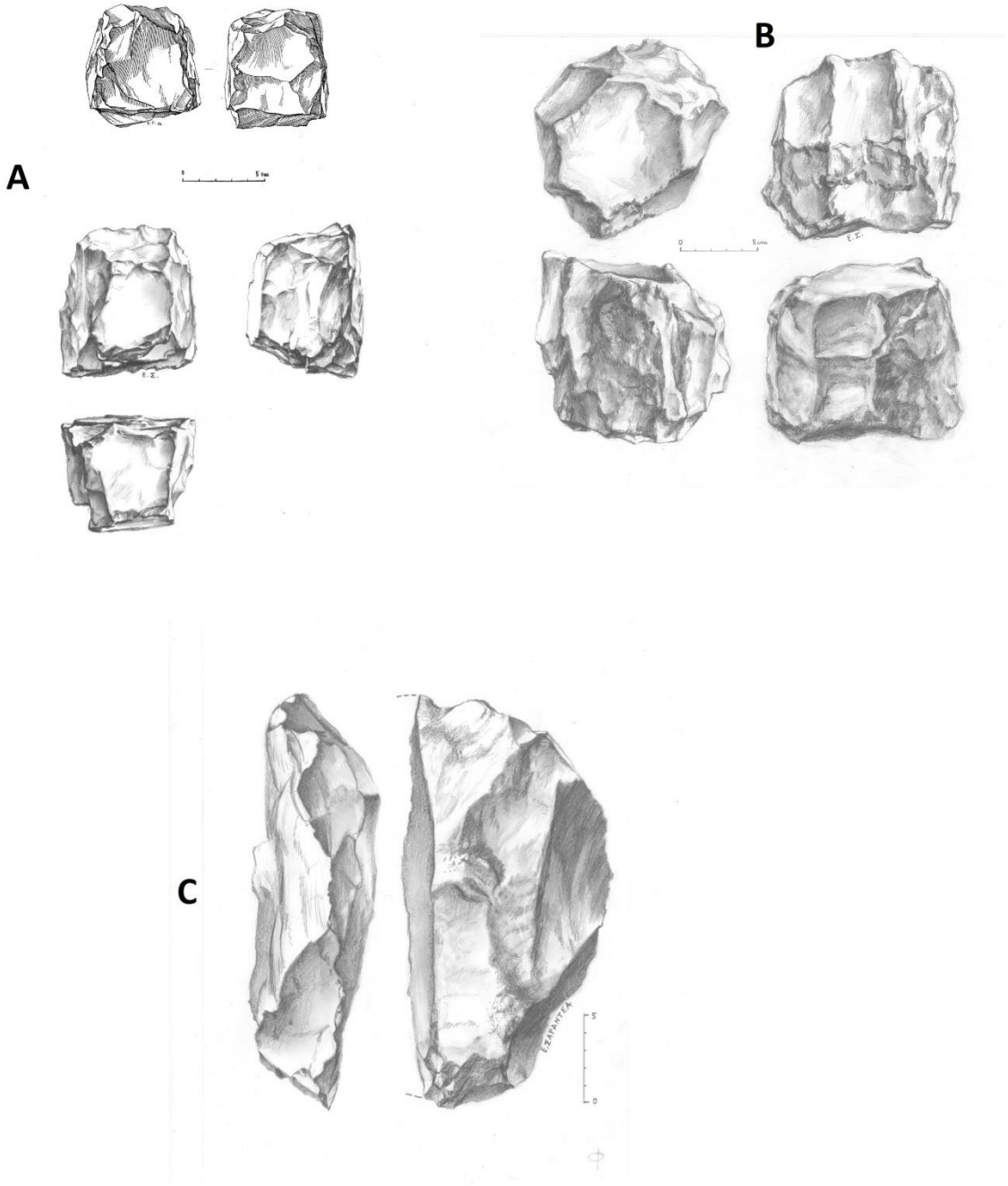

FIG. 3

A - Two cores. Above, cubic core from Faneromeni. Below, polyhedral core from Voleri.[1]

B - Polyhedral core. It was found in the northern coastal Voleri, nearby the Wetland.. End of Acheulean or Early Middle Palaeolithic.

C - Big discoidal core broken transversely. Diameter 23 cm. Faneromeni.

[1] Similar to cores of Joubb Jannine II (Lebanon) of Early Middle Aheulean period (Wendorf and Marks 1973, 257).

3. VOLERI AND FANEROMENI. PRIVILEGED PALAEOLITHIC SITES

3.1. Voleri

The rocky peninsula of Voleri lies southwest of the Wetland of Psachna - Artaki and north of "Zefyros" location. From the twin peak dual siliceous top "Two Mountains" (61 m. altitude) to Chalkida-Edipsos street, and from the place where the seaside "Zefyros" center is built on up to the Wetland of Psachna, thousands residues of palaeolithic activities were found on the ground dating to different periods. Artifacts, Acheulean typochnology such as handaxes, cleavers, chopping tools, choppers in addition to later-period levallois and discoid cores, tayacian points, denticulate pieces, notches, points, etc. have been resulted from the processing of locally available flints (Sarantea 1986, 1996, 2020. Matzanas 2018, 126, 129).

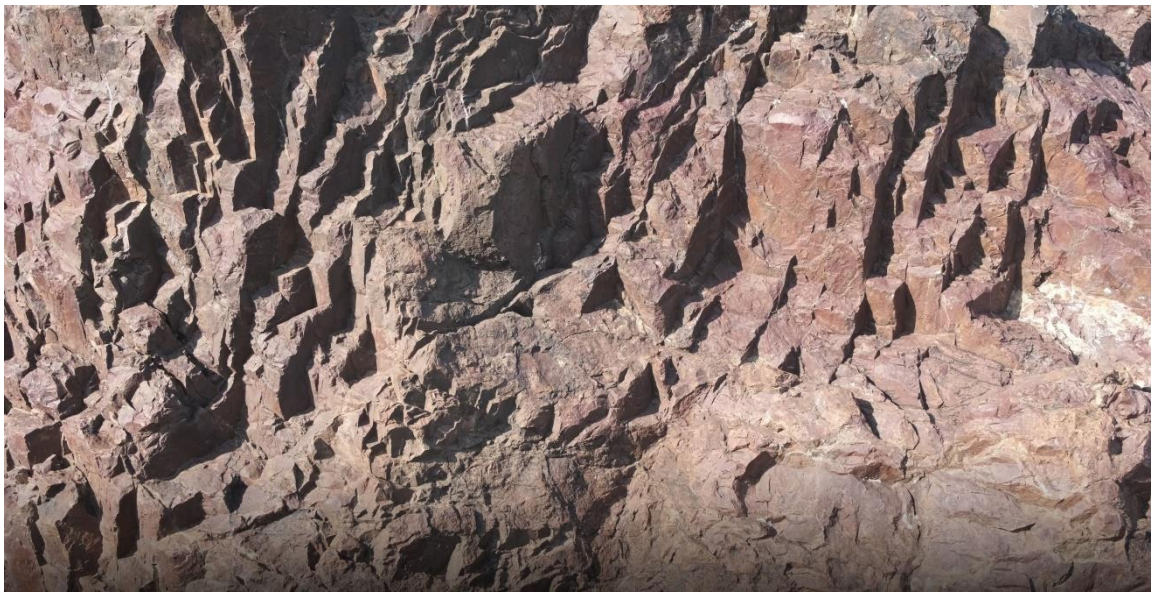

FIG. 4. Flint rock, 1.5 m long, crushed by machines from the top of Voleri (Dyo Vouna). (Photo by Vas. Nikas).

According to Ch. Matzanas, "*The larger objects typically characterize the older phase, i.e. the Early and mostly the Lower Palaeolithic. These are habitually intact multi directional detachment tools. These characteristics are generally in line with the Lower Palaeolithic core-shaped tools*. Artifacts were also classified in the Middle Palaeolithic (118,000-75,000 years ago), the Late Middle Palaeolithic (75,000-50,000 years ago) and the Early Upper Palaeolithic (50-40/35,000 years ago) (Matzanas 2009, 789).

Voleri is the place whereupon A. Sampson wrote that "it has an immense accumulation of tools" (1996, 53). And yet, the richest in palaeolithic findings southern part of Voleri was lost under luxurious dwellings. Its solid siliceous peaks "Dyo Vouna/Two Mountains, were leveled! Villas were built there. Siliceous rocks were crushed or made

into building materials (fig. 4). A land plot with stratigraphy, which had been characterized as archeological site to the NNW of "Zefyros", was swept away: Bulldozers leveled both the intersection and the surrounding area, with various stone tools thereon. The undersigned author saw artifacts at the expanding pier of Nea Artaki at the time, as a result of the earthmoving works carried out from the palaeolithic sites.[2]

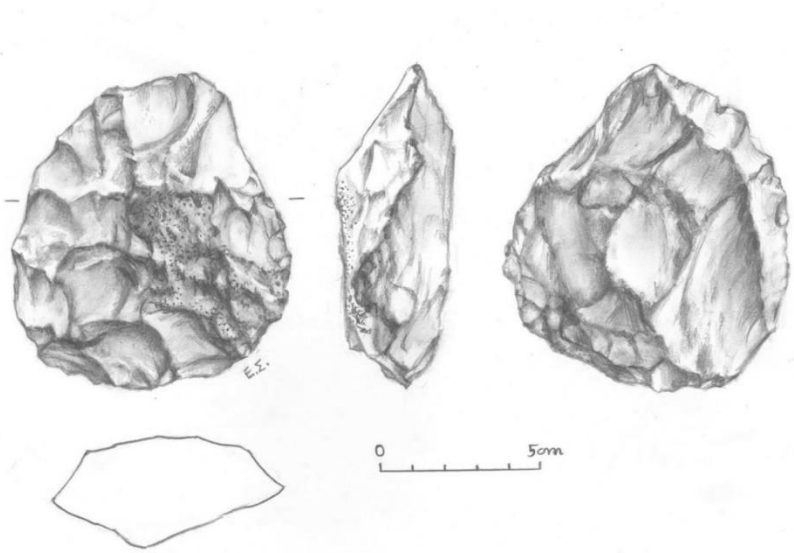

FIG. 5. Cordiform handaxe with cortex of ferronikel mineral on one face, Voleri.[3]

[2] In 2005, the Society of Euboean Studies and other bodies had submitted in vain a proposal to the Archaeological Service and the Prefecture for the creation of a Cultural Park, which could combine bird watching in the adjacent to Voleri Wetland, and sightseeing tours in palaeolithic sites. It could serve as a rare attracting pole for both educational, cultural tourism and ecotourism. Multiannual efforts did not entail the establishment of a local museum. In 2018, the Society of Euboean Studies and 22 other cultural institutions sent to the Presidency of the Republic a request for finding venues and establishing a Museum for the palaeolithic findings, which has been met with no response from local actors.

[3] A finding of Ch. Matzanas (Matzanas 2004, 123-4). Morphootechnology similar to an acheulean handaxe from Beirut (Wendorf F. and Marks A. 1973, 262).

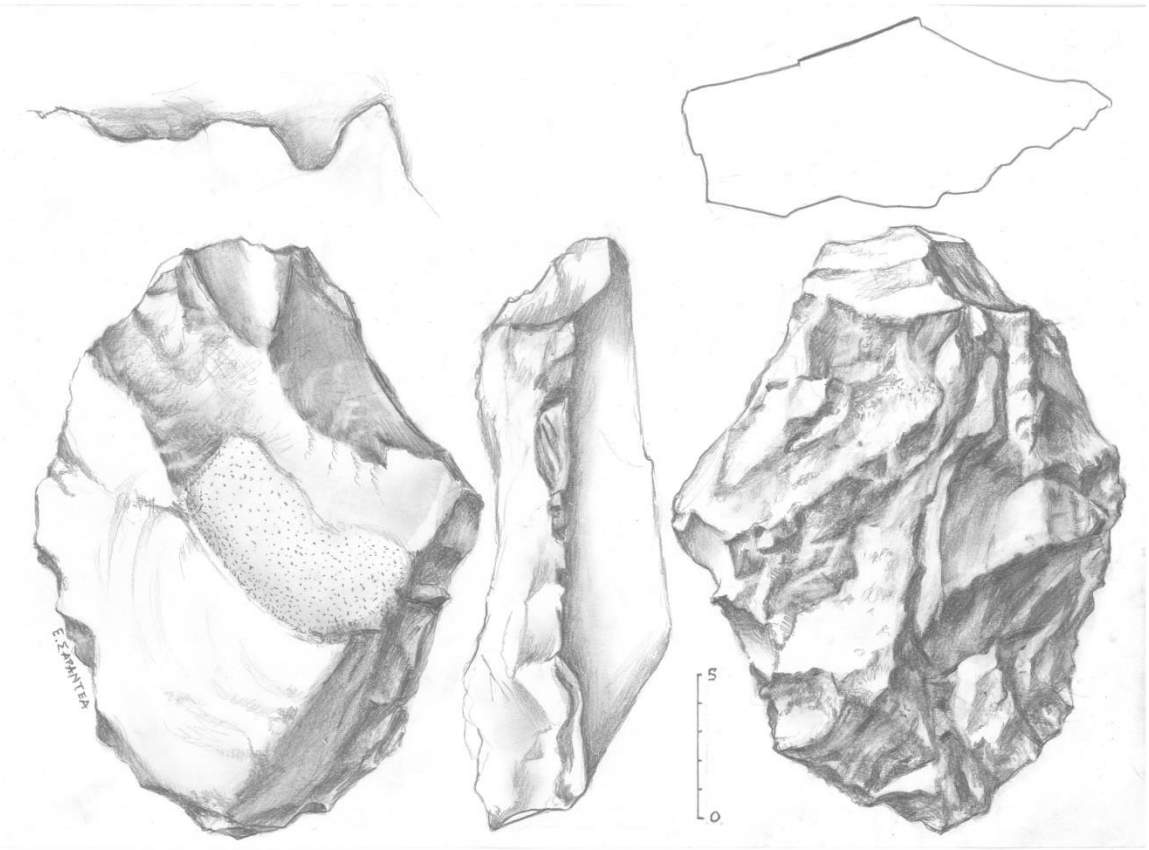

FIG. 6. Massive chopping tool from Voleri, weighting 2,236 gr.

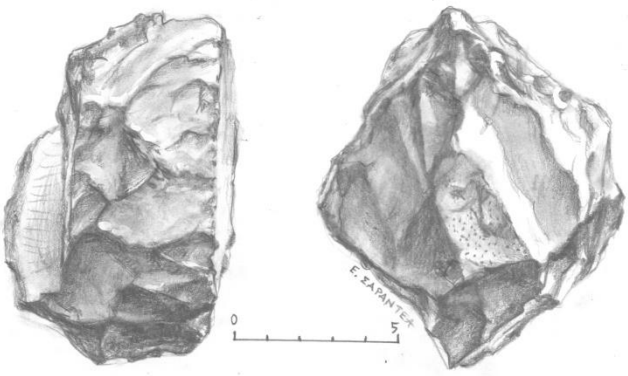

FIG. 7. Chopper from Voleri.

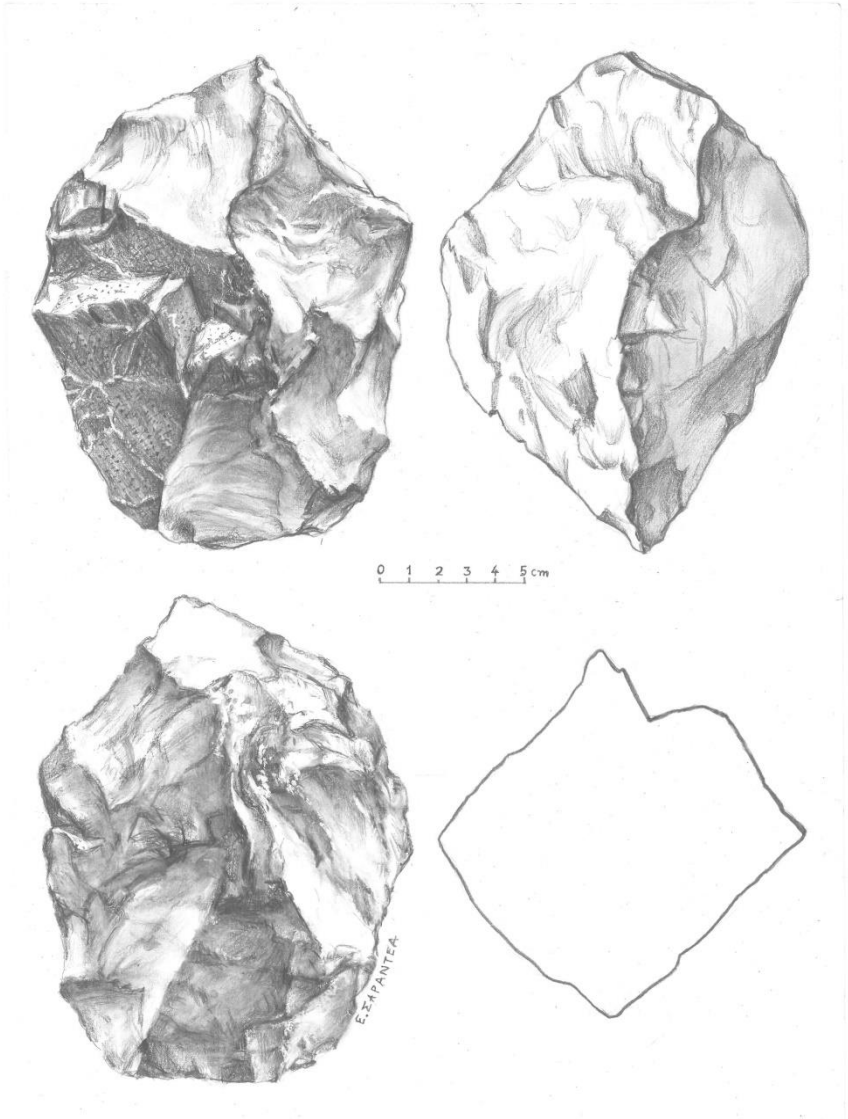

FIG. 8. Massive artifact (handaxe ?), with square cross-section, from Voleri.

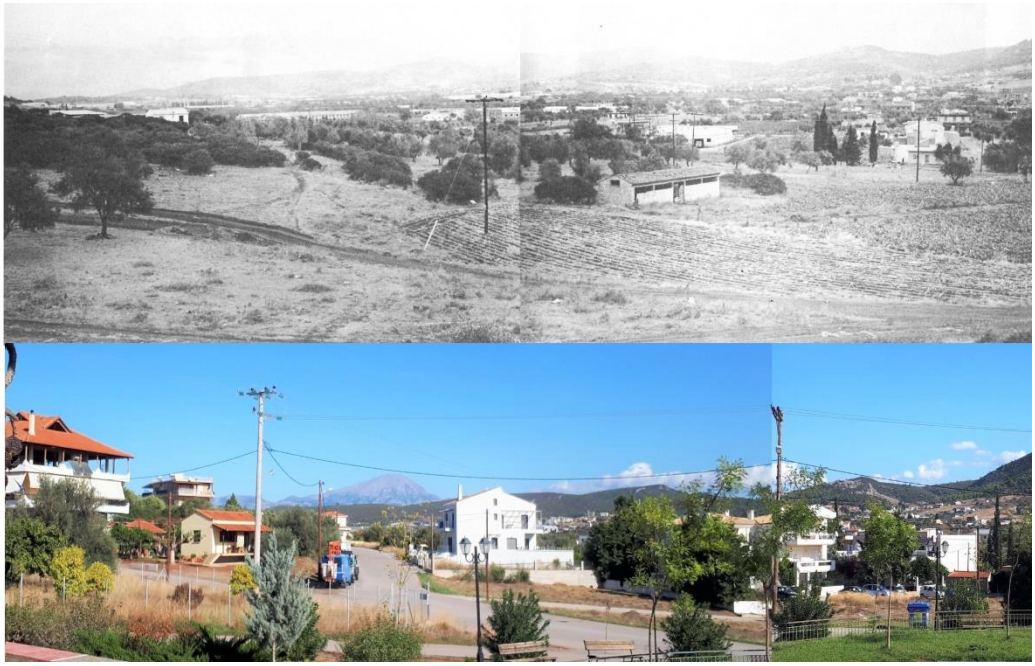

FIG. 9. Faneromeni. The workshop for the construction of flint (silcrete) originated palaeolithic stone tools in the years 1986 and 2019 (left, behind the dwellings, the current southern end of "Madri" location, fig. 1). (Photos by G. Michas).

3.2. Faneromeni

Along the coast of Faneromeni district and around the church, as well as to the south, towards Manika, thousands of minor palaeolithic siliceous tools are found on the soil ground of cretaceous limestones, originating from seasonal nomadic settlement, around the end of the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic period, such as a variety of scrapers, notches, awls, points, etc. (Sarantea 1986, 86-87).

A series of reddish-brown flint rocks, about 250 m long, was used as a place for tool making, within various palaeolithic periods. It is located 300 m. east of the coast and 400 m. NNE of Faneromeni church (between the two Elementary Schools) (Sarantea 1996, 43-47). It is a place with a clear image of a stone tool construction area. This is a site bearing no relation to common view of flints, according to N. Skarpelis, Professor of Geology at the University of Athens, in agreement with the undersigned (1986, 1992, 1996), the French geologist J. Collina-Girard ("Physiognomy of quarry site", autopsy 1995), and A. Darlas (according to the archeological sign to be placed in Faneromeni (reg. no 32415/27-7-17).

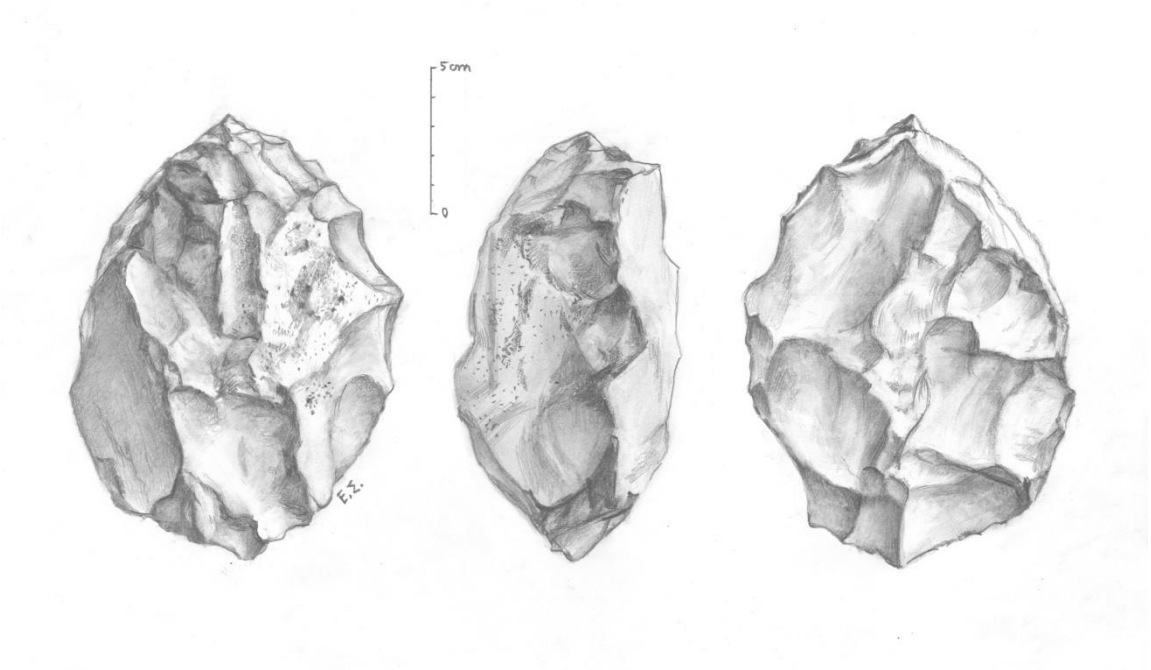

FIG. 10. Almond-shaped / Plano-convex handaxe. Faneromeni

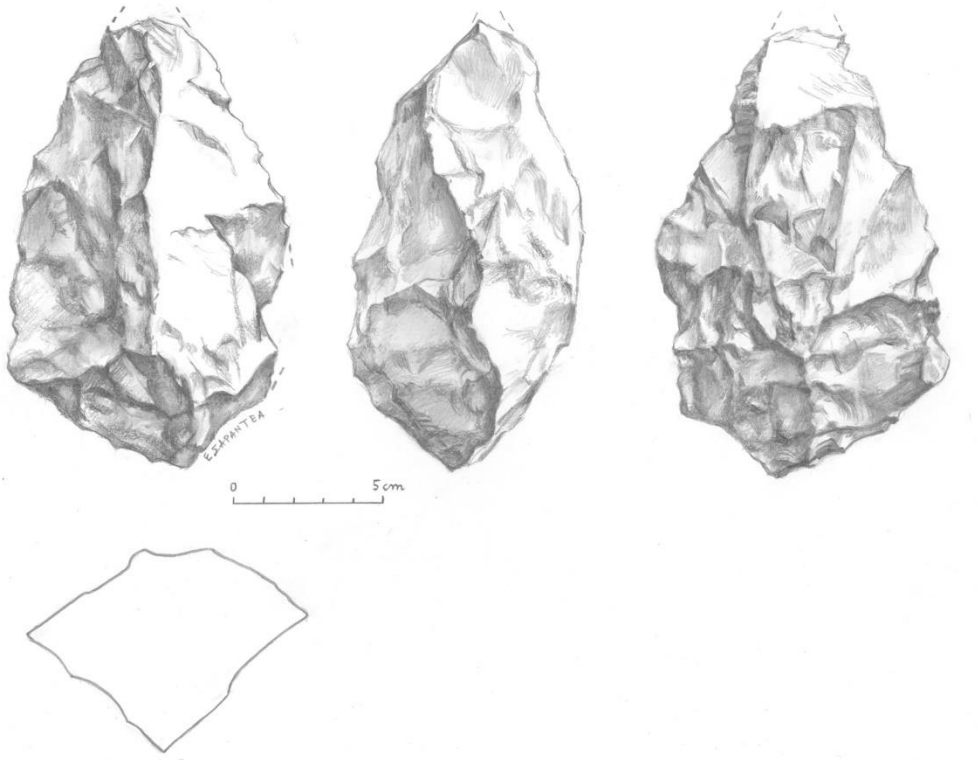

FIG. 11. Handaxe of approximately rhomboid section, Faneromeni.

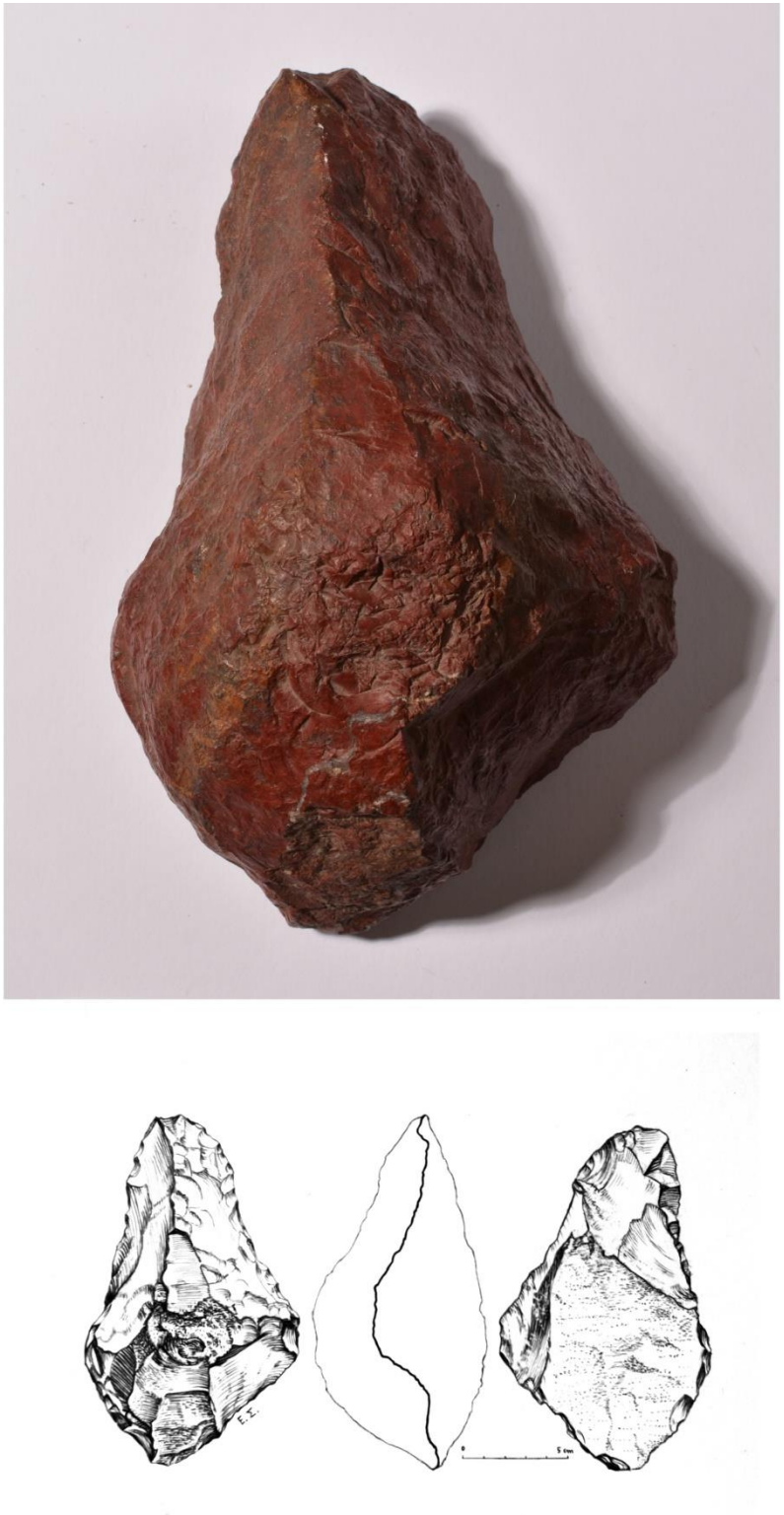

FIG. 12. Ficron-type handaxe with concave sides and hemispherical handling, used unilaterally as scraper. Middle Acheulean (?). Faneromeni.

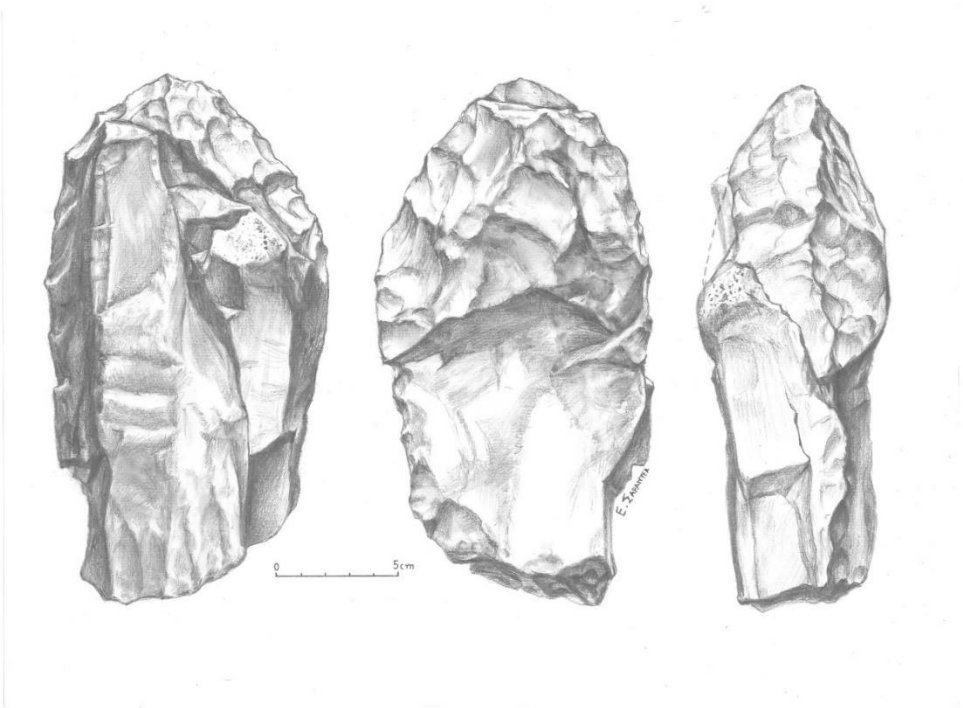

FIG. 13. Massive 22 cm long biface, weighing 2,260 g, with the cortex of the rock occupying one side. Tool with particularly worn surface, where cracking ripples and old small detachments can be seen. It is probably struck by use on the right edge. It was found in 1982 on the surface of a flat flint rock, which was soon destroyed by an excavator. Faneromeni.

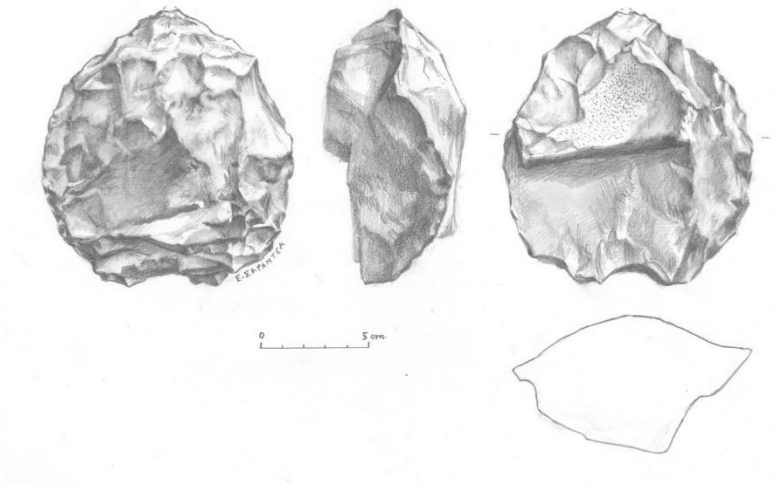

FIG. 14. Heart-shaped handaxe, with broad cross-section. Unilaterally fractured. Faneromeni.[4]

[4] Its morphotechnology points to artifact from Rodafnidia, an Acheulean site of Lesvos (Galanidou 2019).

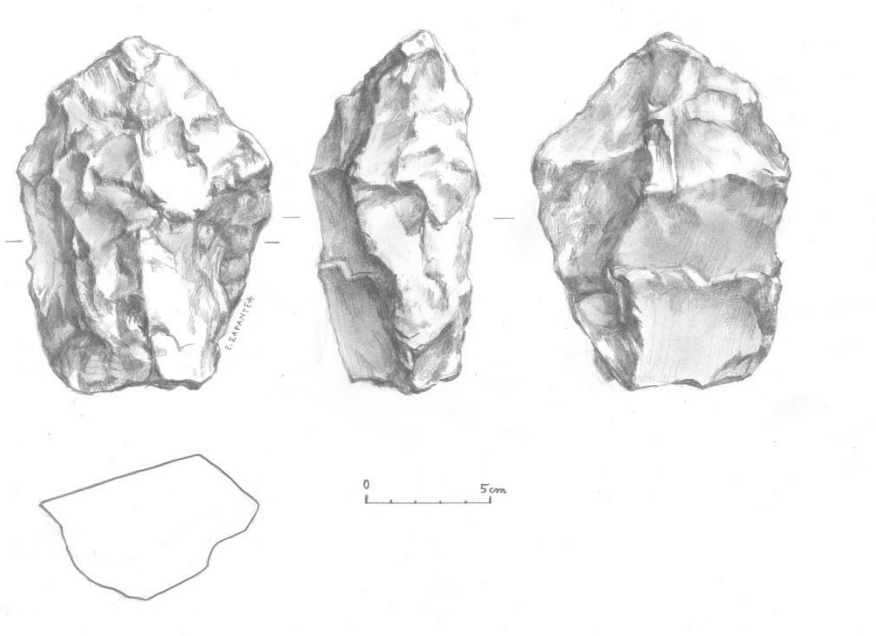

FIG. 15. Handaxe with broad cross-section. Faneromeni.

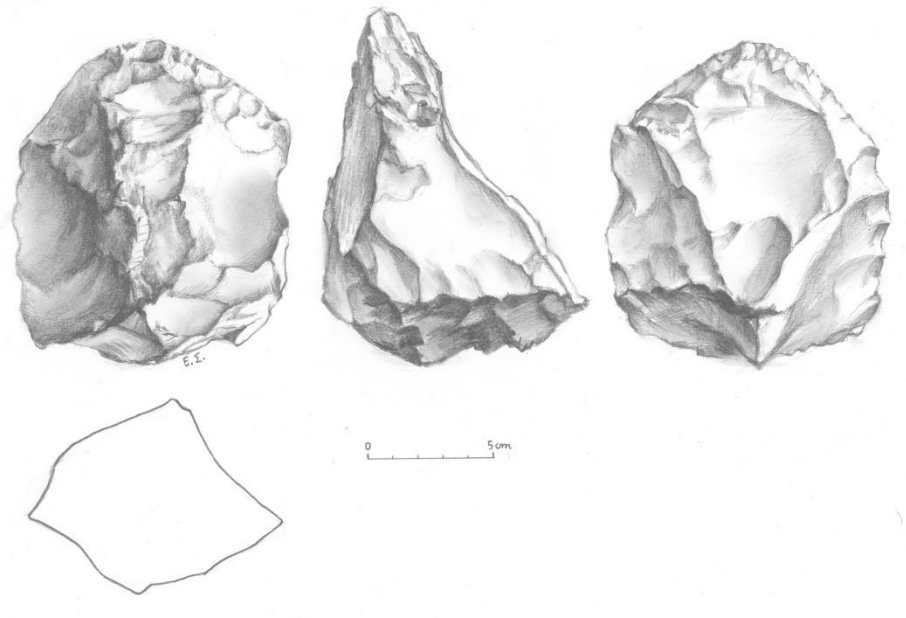

FIG. 16. Handaxe / chopping tool with rhomboid section. Faneromeni.

Lots of cores left after the chipping of stones, flakes, processing fragments, massive or medium-sized tools, sophisticated and unfinished, hammerstones, etc. (fig. 3). They were observed on and around the rocks, at a distance no more than 100 m. from the whole district of Faneromeni, only in the area of quarry sites I found large-sized tools and cores, including tools of the Lower Palaeolithic morphotechnology. A. Moundrea-Agrafioti distinguished in my private Collection some artifacts originating from the quarry sites of Faneromeni, describing them as *"massive unusual bifacial processed tools with triangular or prismatic cross-section"* (autopsy 12-3-1985). According to Ch. Matzanas: *"... The increase in size is connected with the increase of multi-directional detachments, a characteristic of earliness and application of coarser tool-processing techniques..."* (2009, 789).

The indifference of the State for this palaeolithic quarry site of Faneromeni is inconceivable: In the northern part of the series of flint rocks with traces of tool-making workshops, the 3rd Elementary School was built in 1985. The rest of their central and southern part – being a municipal site and furthermore a declared archeological site (formerly "Madri") – is unprotected and has been circumferentially destroyed after the extension of the boundaries of the surrounding adjacent dwellings. The inhabitants make use of locally available siliceous stones and palaeolithic artifacts as building materials! Moreover, in the name of "development", an asphalt (slightly used) road construction was allowed within the boundaries of the southern part of the rocks. Nowadays, only a small part of the whole workshop space has remained, with scarce surficial remnants of ancient human activity. Given the sloping ground, excavator uncovered a "stratigraphy" at the road section, where can be seen palaeolithic artifacts in layers at a depth of 80, 60 and 40 cm.

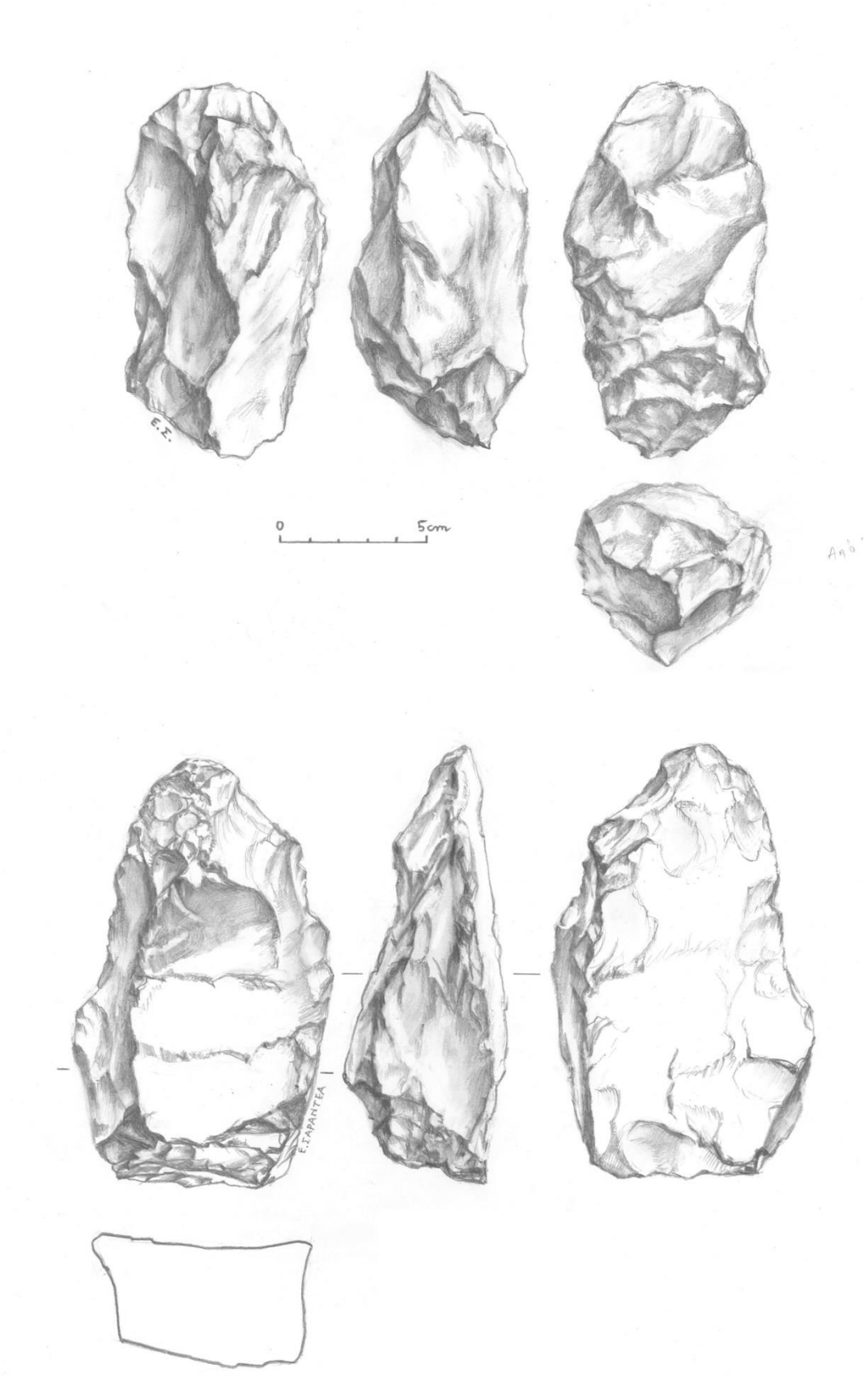

FIG. 17. Bifaces from Feneromeni.

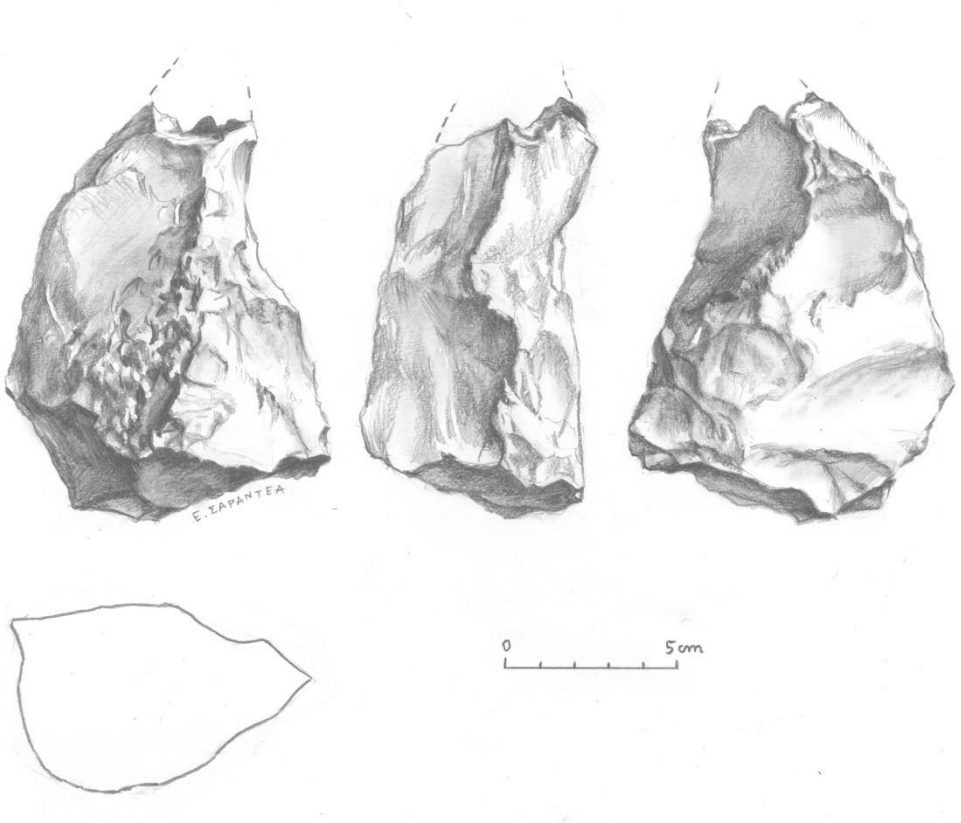

FIG. 18. Flake with hemispherical handle. Faneromeni.

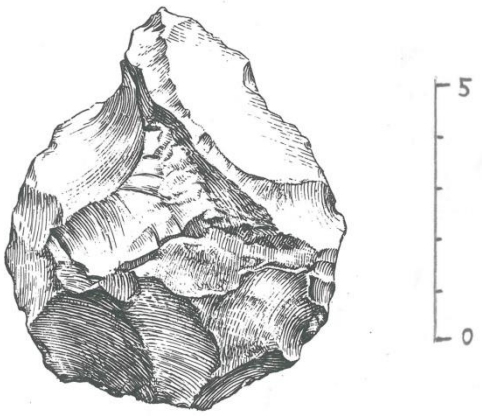

FIG. 19. The lower part of a broken handaxe. Faneromeni.

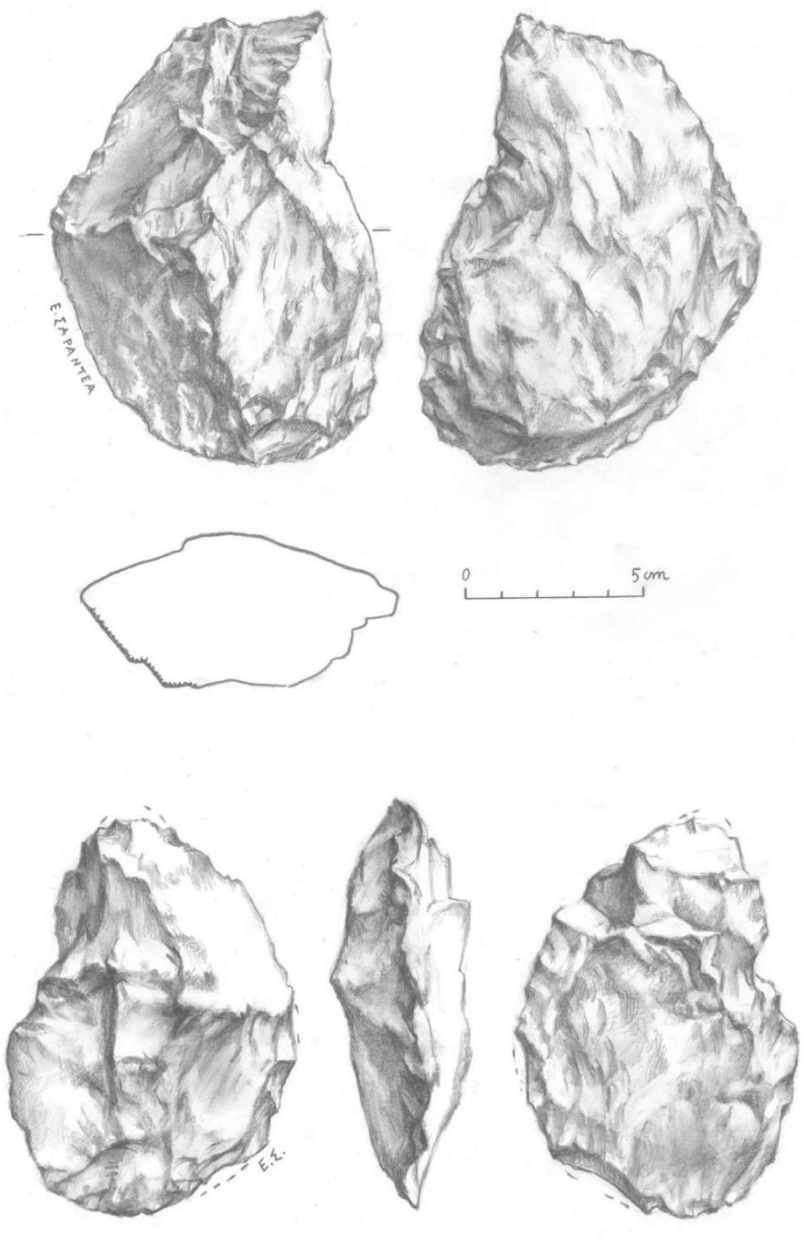

FIG. 20. Large-sized flakes, modified to slightly retouched tools. The base (handle) of tool on the top is typically glossy.[5] Faneromeni.

[5] Similar to flake of Swanscombe (Bordes, 1979, pl. 39, No 15).

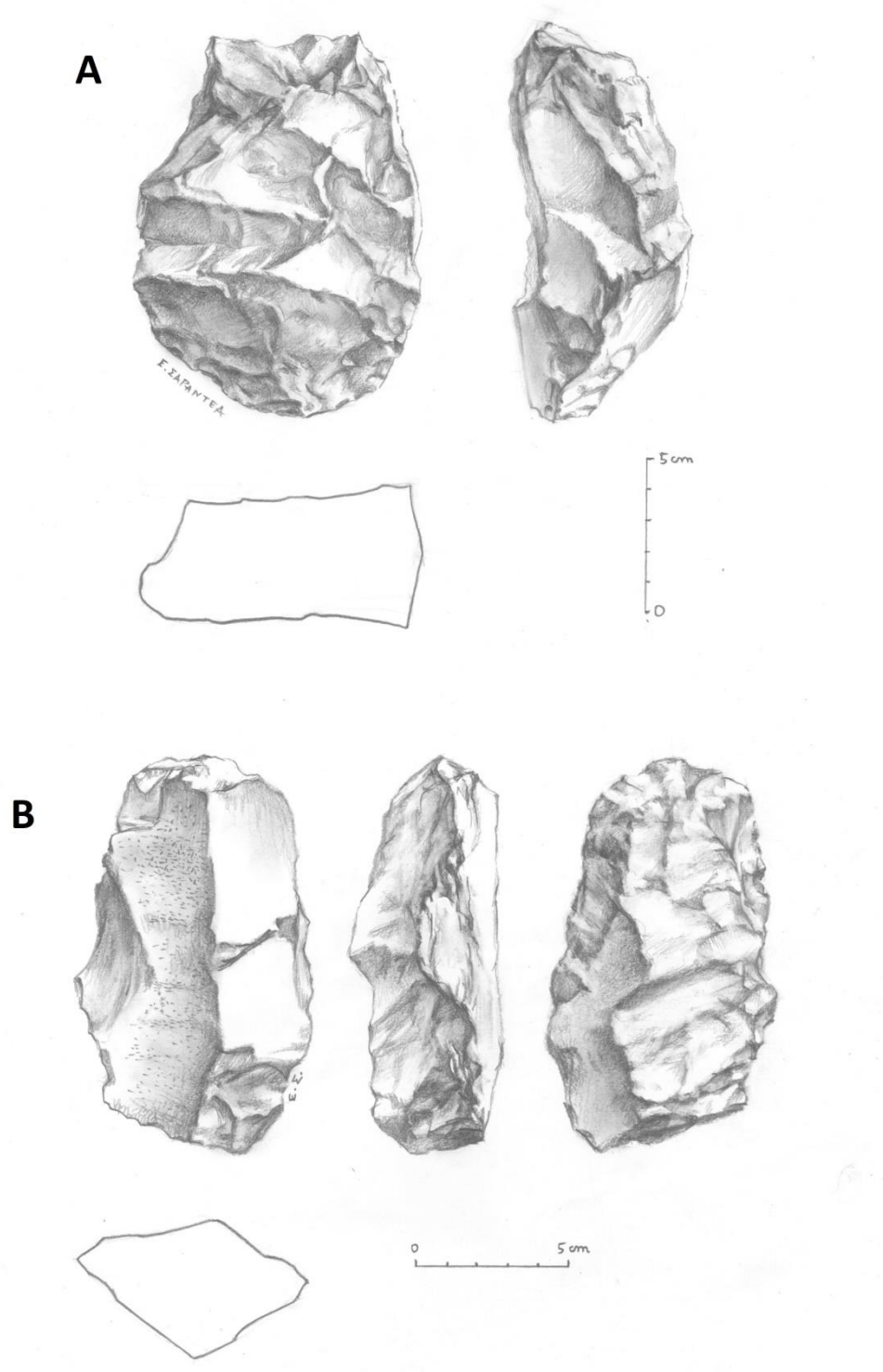

FIG. 21. A) Cleaver, fractured at the upper edge. The base (handle) is smooth. B). Biface with parallel edges, and almost rhomboidal section, fractured at the upper end. Faneromeni.

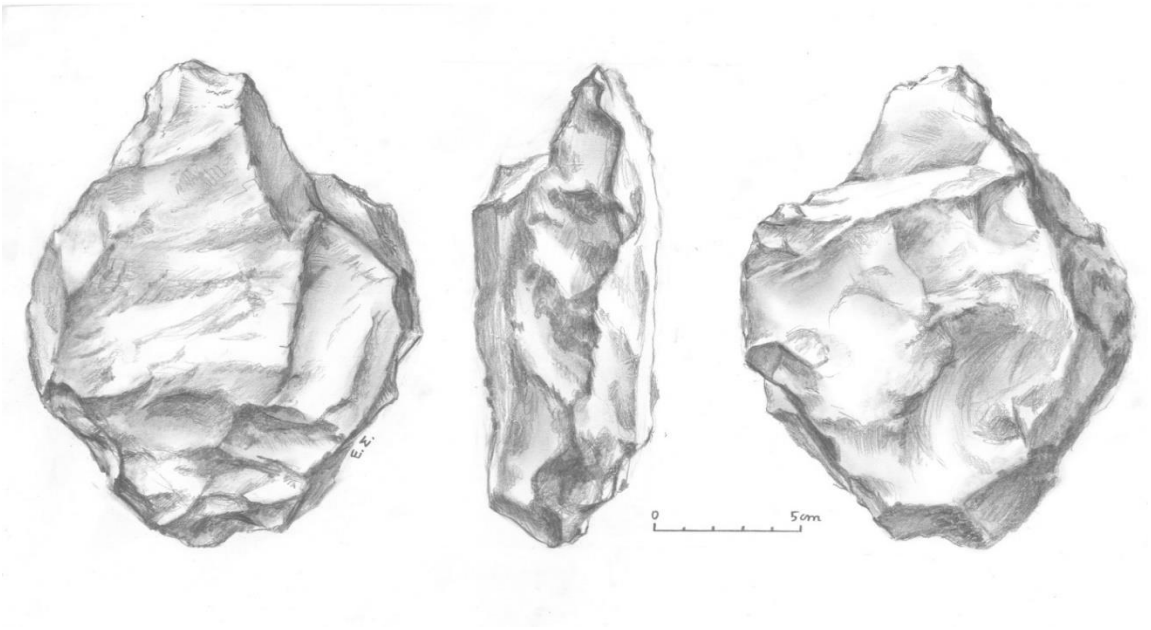

FIG. 22. Core or biface (?), 18.4 cm long. Faneromeni.

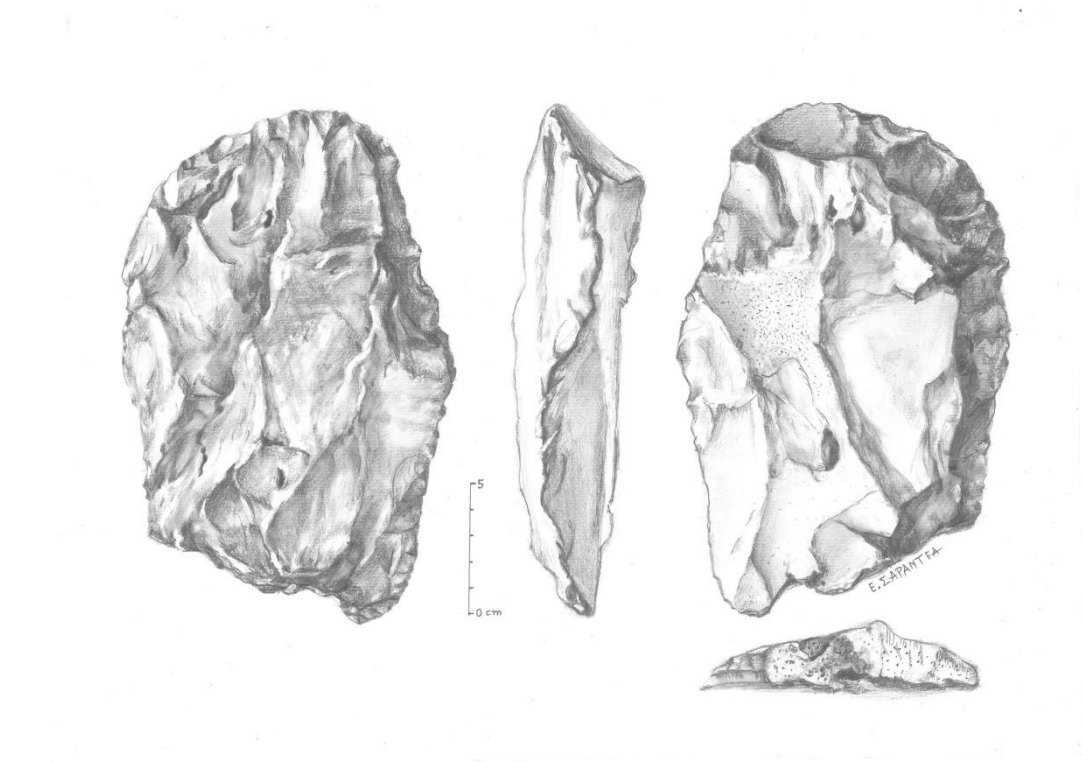

FIG. 23. Cleaver 20 cm long. Faneromeni.

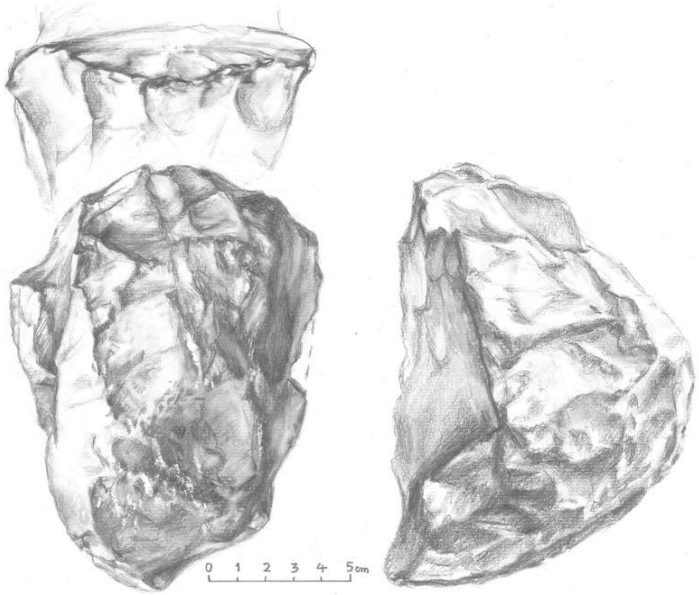

FIG. 24. Massive carinated frontal scraper. This tool and the lyre-shaped cleaver of fig, 22 A, were found at a location nearby, weighing 1,980 gr each. Faneromeni.

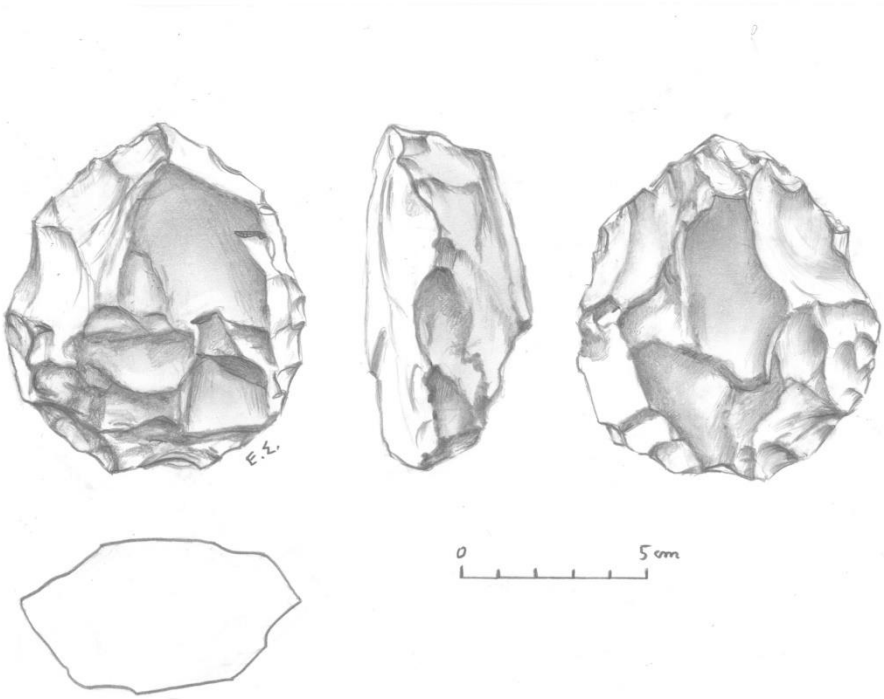

FIG. 25. Cordiform handaxe. Faneromeni.

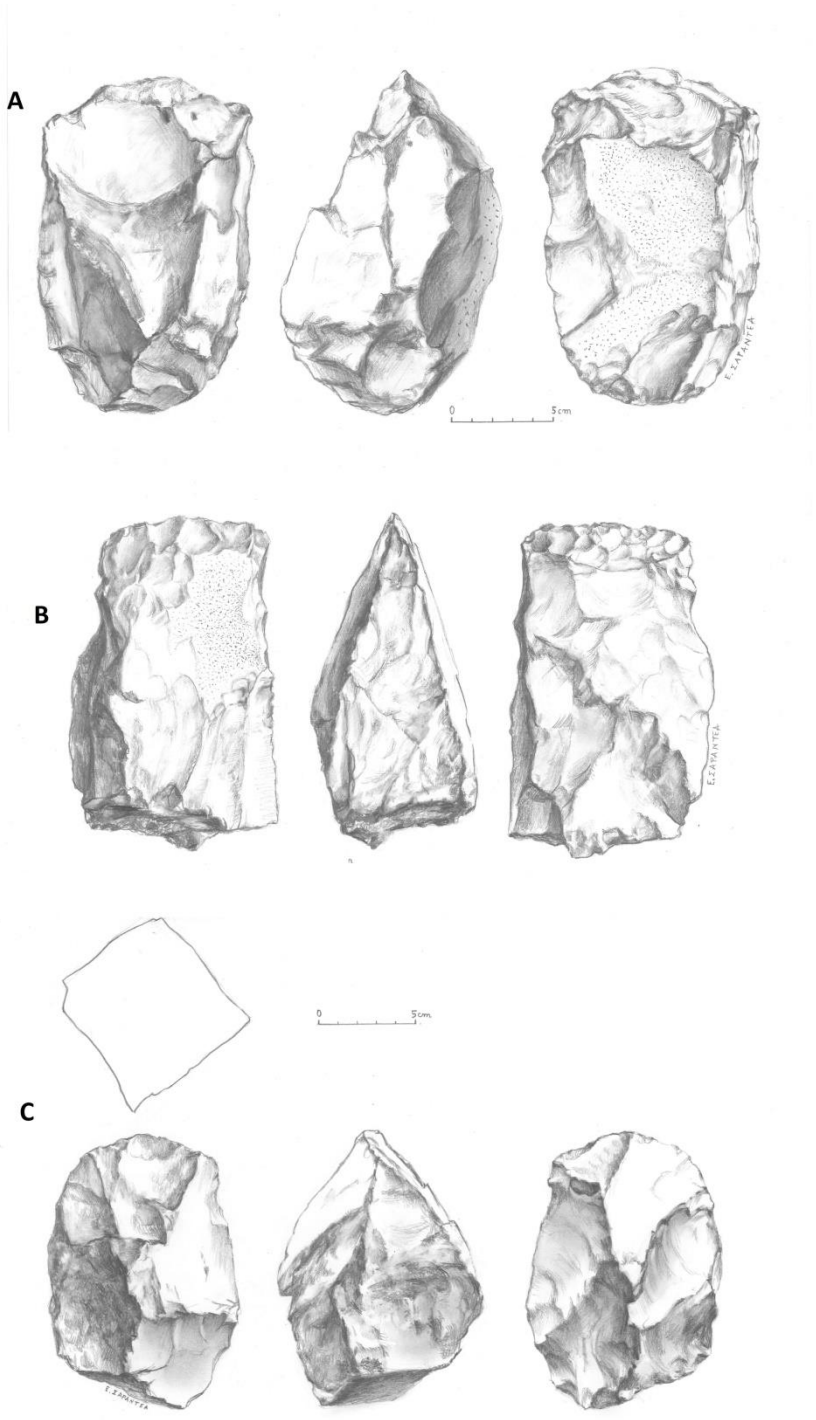

FIG. 26. A) Massive lyre-shaped cleaver 16.5 cm long, weighing 1,980 g, with wavy edge, broad cross-section and rock cortex on one side. B) Massive cleaver 16 cm long, with approximately square cross-section and the cortex occupying the base. C) Massive cleaver/ chopping tool, with square cross-section.

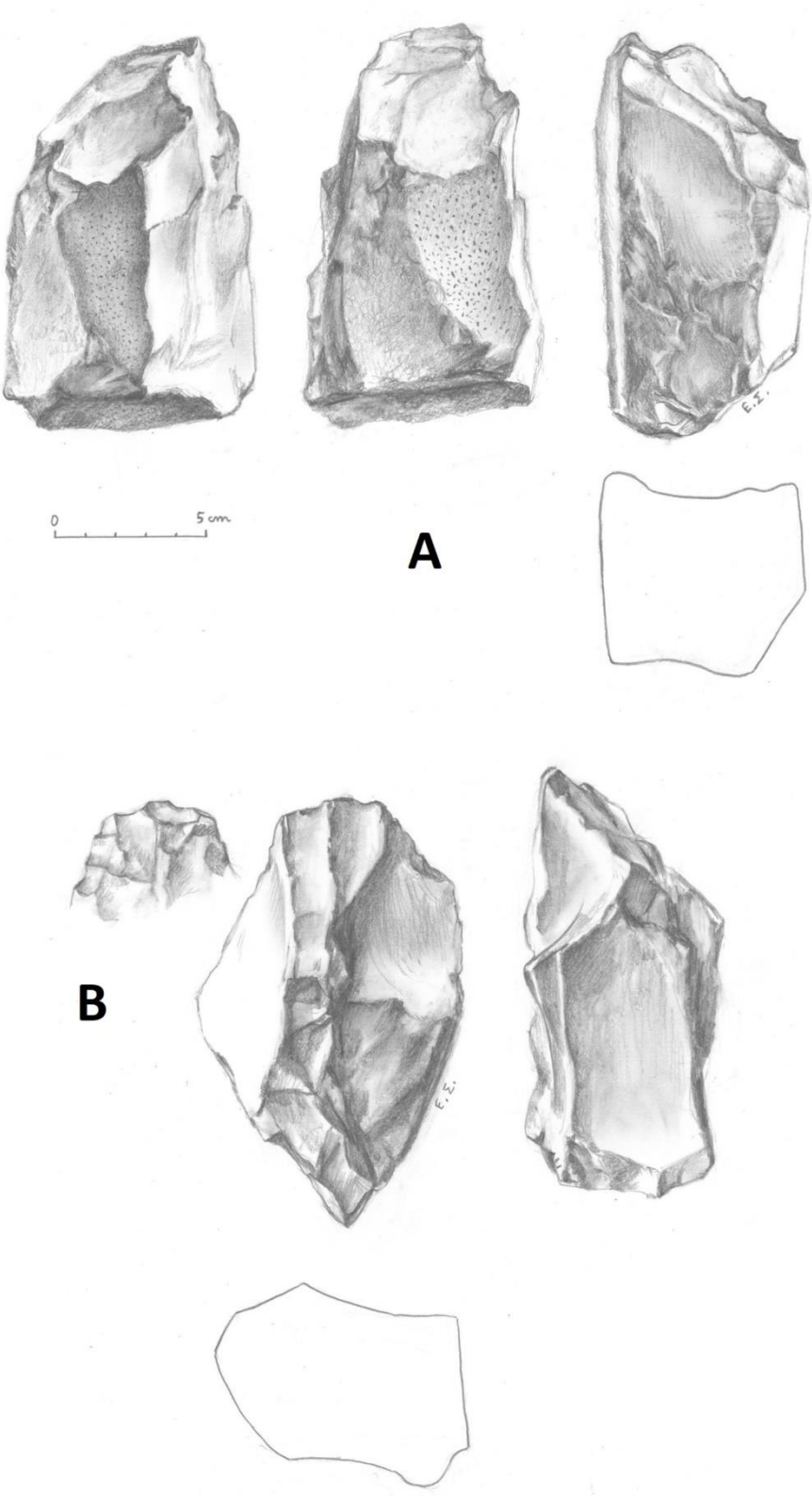

FIG. 27. A) Cleaver. B) Composite tool: Its distal edge serves as chopping tool and its inferior as cleaver. The intersections of both tools are polygonal. Faneromeni.

4. CONCLUSION

The disrespect and decadent conditions that prevailed in the last decades in the north of Chalkida, up to the Wetland of Nea Artaki-Psachna, led to the unjust loss of extremely interesting places and objects, a long series of civilizations - from the Early Prehistoric to the Hellenistic period - that could enhance the site and its Nature, History and the Prehistory of the cultural heritage for the next generations. The damage to the environment is irreparable. Uneducated money chasers in the name of temporary profit do stop at nothing. Municipal authorities are non-existent. The misconceived "Development" against any price, led to the destruction (Sarandea E., (MA) Archive of Euboean Studies 41, under publication).

The complete destruction of one of the most important early archaeological sites in Greece, which has been known since 1977, will be a stain. Its surficial material contributes to the further understanding of the role of the hellenic region in the global research of the human evolutionary process. Therefore, it is urgently needed the effective protection of specific undisturbed sites with findings of Acheulean if not even earlier technology, for future research and deployment for the public. This request has been made for decades to the competent authorities by citizens, politicians, cultural institutions, the press and even students.

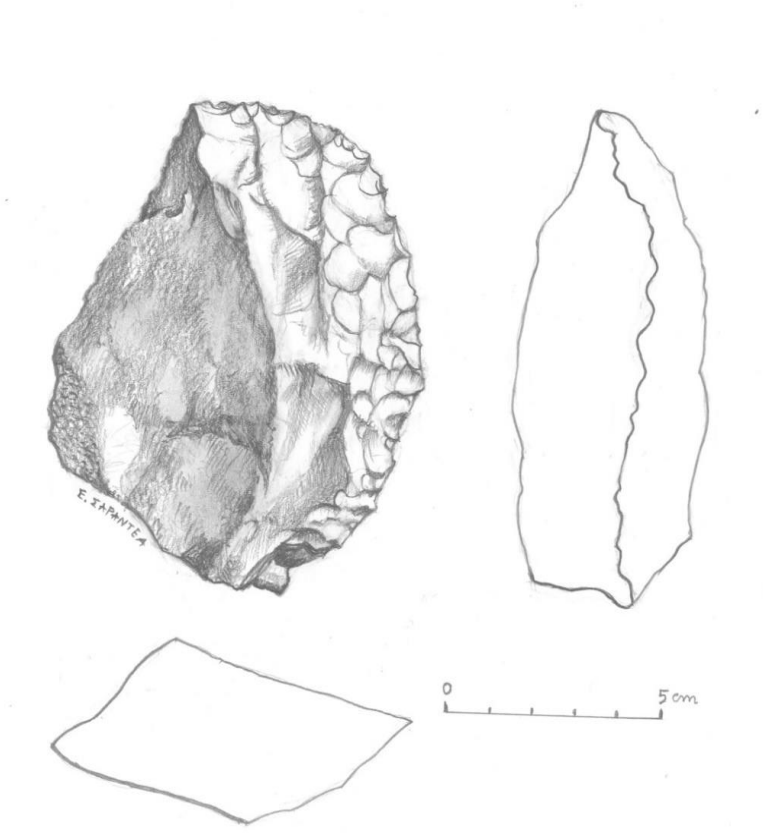

FIG. 28. Mousterian knife, Faneromeni

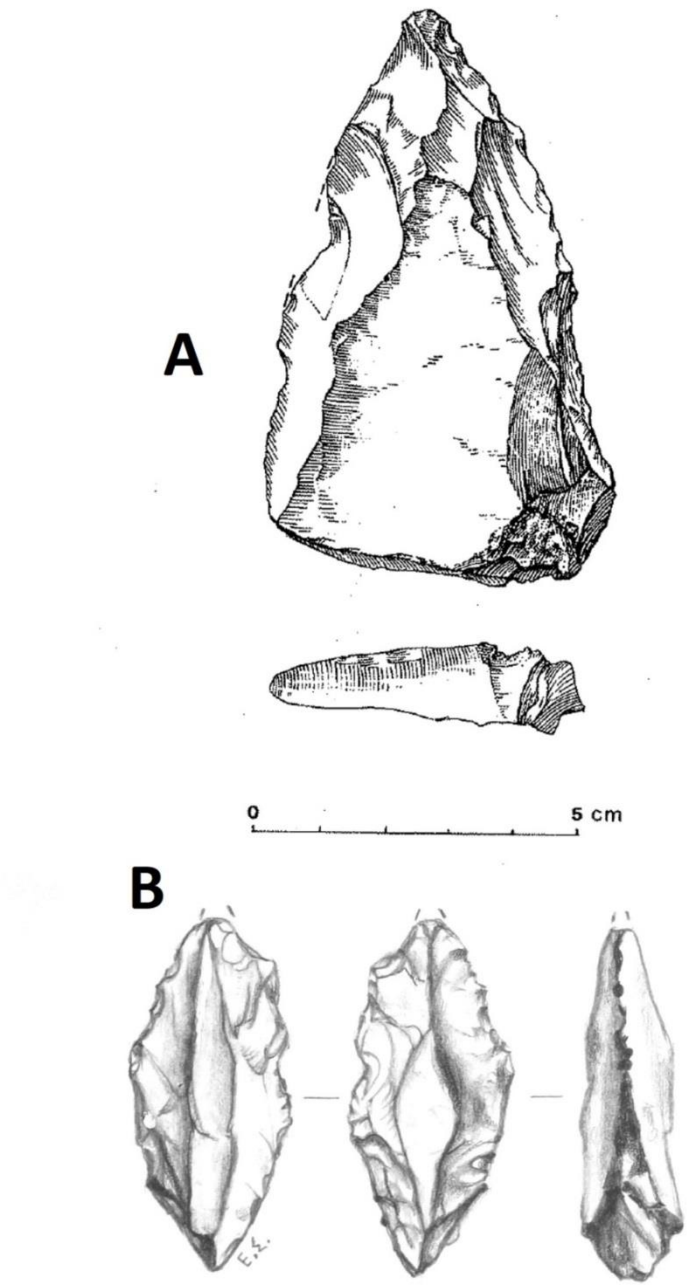

FIG. 29. Hunting points: A) A levallois point from Voleri. B) A leaf-shaped point made by applying pressure flaking from the area of Gipedo/Field at Nea Artaki, where traces of swampland have been found.

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