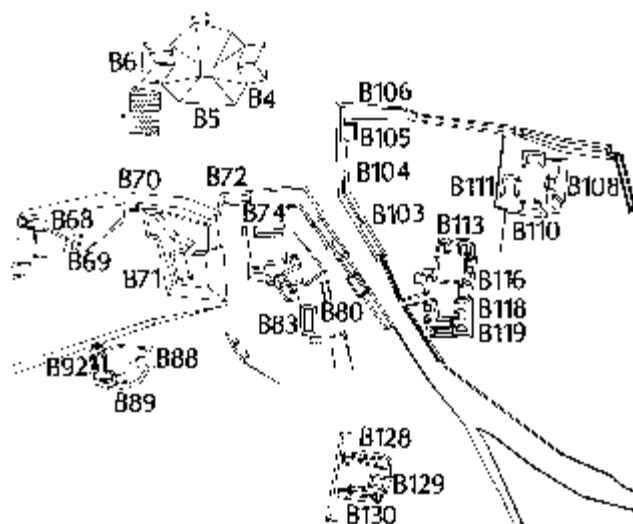


**EPICENTRAL RING SETTLEMENT:
REPORT OF THE SPRING 2000 FIELD SEASON AT CARACOL, BELIZE**

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with an Appendix on:

Cohune Ridge Archaeological Settlement Survey

by

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Report Submitted to the Ahau Foundation

Epicentral Ring Settlement:

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The 2000 field season of the Caracol Archaeological Project took place from late January through the end of March. The excavation crew consisted of a total of 28 individuals during the field season (see Table 1). The investigations focused on the walled area immediately southwest of the Caracol epicenter. These investigations were conducted to resolve questions about the status and occupational specialization of individuals either living in or using this area of the site. These investigations were additionally important for resolving questions about models of Maya urbanism at Caracol. Excavations focused on:

- The raised platforms immediately south of the epicenter and west of the Conchita Causeway, as bounded and defined by architectural constructions involving walls, balustrades, and terraces ([Figure 1](#); see also A. Chase and D. Chase 1987:66 [title page illustration]).**
- A single (but recognizable) residential plazuela group adjacent to and immediately south of the above area ([Figure 24](#)).**

Mapping and test excavation in the agricultural terraces also took place in the northern part of Caracol in association with Timothy Murtha's dissertation research at Pennsylvania State University (see Appendix 1).

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Epicentral Ring Investigations: The Problem

The central architecture of sites - usually representing the most massive construction at any given center - has been the traditional focus of many Maya archaeological projects. Such epicentral research is also usually supplemented by settlement work that shows the distribution of residential plazas at any given site. But, exactly who lived where has been difficult to define (e.g., A. Chase and D. Chase 1992). Models for the spatial ordering of Classic Maya society have been extensively debated (Arnold and Ford 1980; Folan et al. 1982; Ford and Arnold 1982; Haviland 1982). And, various measures have been used to differentiate social status and role within Maya archaeological data - with variables ranging from volume and size of residential compound (Adams and Jones 1991; Jaeger 1994) to the number of objects within an interment (Krejci and Culbert 1995; Welsh 1988). More recently stable isotope analysis has begun to be utilized to characterize Maya populations (Gerry and Krueger 1997; White 1997).

The application of stable isotope analysis to the bone of individuals from epicentral and core settlement at Caracol, Belize, has been particularly informative to the site's social and spatial organization. Drs. Christine White and Fred Longstaffe of Western Ontario University have analyzed a sample of 85 individuals from interments at Caracol (out of 438 individuals from 249 burials). The values obtained from these analyses are not randomly distributed at the site, but rather reveal distinct patterns in the way that individuals buried within the associated settlement are organized. A specific "palace diet" has been defined that correlates with the city's downtown stone edifices (A. Chase and D. Chase 2001a). Interestingly, what appear to be the worst dietary patterns in the city are those that directly encircle the site epicenter (D. Chase et al. 1998). Consistently, Caracol

residential groups that are located just outside the site epicenter contain individuals whose diets significantly diverge from those found both in association with the site's stone-walled palaces and from those found in residential settlements that are further distant and embedded in Caracol's agricultural terraces (A. Chase and D. Chase 1998).

Several alternatives exist to explain this odd dietary distribution. Landa presented a concentric model for the organization of social status at a Maya site - in which the rich and powerful were concentrated around the central plazas of a Maya center and the poorer folk lived on the outskirts of a center (e.g. D. Chase 1986, Marcus 1983; Tozzer 1941). Contrary to Landa, however, standard urban theory posits that a "transitional" region (also the locus of manufacturing and factories), usually occupied by urban poor, be concentrated around any urban center with wealthier individuals living beyond this transitional area (Burgess 1925). While the dietary information derived from the Caracol archaeological data could be used to support the standard model used in general urban theory, not enough excavation had been undertaken prior to the 2000 field season to definitively indicate that the modern Burgess model was, in fact, relevant to the ancient Maya situation.

Epicentral Ring Investigations: The Investigations

The area selected for archaeological investigation during Spring 2000 was located west of the Conchita Causeway and its parapets, east of the Central Acropolis, and south of the raised platform/wall that forms the southern limit of the formal epicenter. Within this bounded portion of Caracol are a series of raised building platforms that form relatively unstructured residential groups ([Figure 1](#)). Compared to the organized plaza remains found in the southeastern walled section, the southwestern walled area is disorganized. The apparently unstructured focus of these structures and their location nestled within the corner of the southwest walled area was suggestive of a potentially different use for this part of Caracol.

Investigations focused on the mapped Structure B71 as well as the Structure B74 through Structure B83 area. Investigations were also conducted in a more formally constructed plazuela group (Structures B126-B131; [Figure 24](#)) immediately south of the walled area to gain comparative temporal, functional, and stable isotope information for the nearest clearly recognizable residential group. A variety of excavations, including a combination of areal clearing and deeper penetration, were undertaken in all of these areas.

Structure B83

Structure B83 is a very noticeable building platform that dominates the southern end of the southwest walled area ([Figure 1](#)). Its long axis runs north-south and it presumably faced west. The structural platform rises approximately 2 meters above the surrounding ground level and the large unshaped boulders that formed part of its facings are in clear surface alignment ([Figure 4](#)). The structure itself was bi-level with a lower frontal terrace that is evident in both excavations undertaken in association with the building.

Suboperation C152B ([Figure 3](#)) was the primary investigation made into Structure C83 and consisted of an axial excavation measuring 12.4 m east-west by 1.5 m north-south ([Figure 5](#)). Three distinct facings, all also inferred from surface remains, were recovered in the axial trench. The entire excavation was dug to bedrock. Investigations revealed a single-phase construction. However, soil differences were encountered within the central structural fills. A grayish hard-packed layer full of earlier sherd material had been placed directly above bedrock. The actual building platform was then constructed on top of this initial layer and included many more rocks than the lower fill. No formal floors were encountered within the excavation. Human cranial fragments were recovered in the humus and collapse levels in the eastern end of the trench. The only reconstructable ceramic vessel, a large unslipped olla of late Terminal Classic date ([Figure 6b](#)), was also recovered in association with the eastern end of the trench; it was presumably associated with the final use of Structure B83.

Suboperation C152C ([Figure 2](#)) was an areal excavation placed over an alley between Structures B83 and B82. It was undertaken in an attempt to recover *de facto* refuse (as excavations from earlier field seasons in similar locations had yielded such materials). The actual excavation measured 8 m by 2.5 m and recovered the northern facing of Structure B82 and the southern facing of Structure B83. Only the humus layer was removed within this excavation down to the level of the presumed floor (although no evidence of a formal floor was recovered). In the

western end of the alley a human skullcap was recovered in the humus. The eastern end of the excavation produced parts of a large olla ([Figure 6a](#)) similar to that recovered within the Suboperation C152B.

Both excavations were completely backfilled at the conclusion of the 2000 field season.

Structure B80 ([Figure 7](#))

Structure B80 is a very low line-of-stone building immediately northeast of Structure B83 ([Figure 1](#)). The stones comprising the building's facings were not formally faced. The structure presumably faced west. It has a long-axis that runs north-south. Once the leaves and plants had been removed from its surface, the form of the building platform could be ascertained without excavation and its facing stones were mapped ([Figure 8](#)). Two excavations were made to better define this platform and its history. No primary trash was recovered in association with the structure.

Suboperation C153B was a 6.3 m by 1.5 m excavation placed axially to Structure B80 and dug to the level of an earlier surface ([Figure 9](#)). The area exterior to the structure was dug down to an eroded floor level. The area that formed the core of the building was excavated down to an earlier floor level that was plastered in the eastern part of the excavation. Excavation beneath this floor produced Preclassic sherd materials. No primary deposits were encountered. Human cranial fragments, however, were recovered below the humus on the summit of Structure B80.

Suboperation C153C was a 7 m east-west by 2 m north-south excavation set over the northern extent of Structure B80. This areal excavation was dug down to the upper surface of Structure B80 and to the level of the exterior floor. No material that could be construed as being primary trash was recovered.

Both excavations into Structure B80 were completely backfilled at the end of the field season.

Structure B76 ([Figure 10](#))

Located at a higher topographic level than Structures B80 and B83, Structure B76 was a squarish platform that was not clearly associated with any structural grouping. It was situated behind the plazuela group formed by Structures B74, B75, and B79 and also was not in clear association with the lower Structures B80 and B77. It is possible that Structure B75 was a late line-of-stone addition that blocked Structure B76 from an original articulation with Structures B74 and B79. Like the other buildings, its exterior facing stones were unfinished and were visible to some extent on the ground surface ([Figure 11](#)).

Suboperation C154B consisted of a 9.8 m by 1.5 m trench placed on the east-west axis of Structure B76 ([Figure 12](#)). The western part of this trench was excavated more deeply than the eastern section, which was obstructed by a tree and tree roots. The presumed rear of the building, therefore, saw only limited excavation. The interior of Structure B76 was excavated to a depth of approximately 2 m. Several soil changes were evident within the building core. Under the humus, the upper construction core consisted of unshaped rocks in a darker matrix. Below the rocky layer was a lighter color soil level that was not densely packed and that contained shaped and unshaped limestone rocks. At a depth of approximately 1 m a hard packed lens of grayish soil occurred that was mostly devoid of larger rocks. No formal floors were encountered. The construction levels make it likely that the entire Structure B76 locus resulted from a single construction activity. Within the core of the building at the base of the less densely packed matrix, and almost at the building's exact center, were the crushed pieces of two reconstructable vessels, one ([Figure 6c](#)) more complete than the other ([Figure 6d](#)). They do not appear to have accompanied a human interment, although a single human tooth was recovered in the densely packed level beneath and near these vessels. While these vessels may have been broken purposefully *in situ* during construction, they were incomplete and more probably represent material redeposited as fill from an earlier demolished building. Both vessels date to the early part of the Late Classic era, yet ceramic material from within the upper stone core behind the western building facing included sherds with modeled decoration ([Figure 6e](#)) that date to the Terminal Classic.

Suboperation C154C was a 2 m by 1.5 m test excavation placed on axis and adjacent to the southern wall of

Structure B76. Only the humus material was removed in this excavation. The exposure of the large vertical wall stones here precludes the existence of a central stairway on this side of the building.

Both Suboperations C154B and C154C were backfilled at the end of the field season.

Structure B74

Rising approximately 1 m above the ground level and dominating the north side of the southwest walled area, Structure B73 was once a long east-west perishable range building. While it dominated the north side of a definable plaza area, it also may have once formed an architectural pairing with Structure B4. As with other buildings located in this general area, large unworked facing stones could be found on the ground surface to indicated the shape of the structure ([Figure 13](#)). Two excavations were undertaken in relation to this structure. The central one, Suboperation C155B, yielded evidence of chert working.

Suboperation C155B was an axial trench measuring 10.4 m north-south by 1.5 m east-west ([Figure 14](#)). While the southern facing was not initially well defined (although evident in section), except for the surface line of stone, an earlier version of the northern facing was recovered that was associated with formal plaster floors both to the north of the building and on its summit. Only floor bedding was found on the south side of the building. This investigation, then, recovered architectural evidence for two different building episodes. An excavation into the central core of the earlier structure recovered a stone-lensed upper fill over a hard-packed gray to buff-colored lower dirt fill. A fragmented carved bone pin was found in the stone core for the earlier version of Structure B74 ([Figure 15](#)). Although no special deposits were found in the core of the building, two human teeth were recovered in the humus level excavated from within the trench. Sherd materials within the deeply buried construction core indicate that Structure B74 was built no earlier than the early part of the Late Classic Period. Materials overlying the latest version of Structure B74 on its northern end indicate that flint working took place at this locus. While chert occurred throughout the humus and collapse levels within the trench, over 1,000 pieces of flint came out of the northern end of the axial trench exterior to the building: 975 flakes, 64 "chunks," and 6 cores.

Suboperation C156C was placed over the alley between Structure B73 and B74. It measured 7.2 m north-south by 3.6 m east-west. The crude outer facing for Structure C74 (and its associated collapse) and the single line-of-stone facing for Structure B73 were both in evidence after the removal of the humus in Suboperation C156C ([Figure 17](#)). No *de facto* refuse was encountered in this alley.

Both excavations were fully backfilled at the end of the field season.

Structure B73 ([Figure 16](#))

Structure B73 was barely visible on the ground surface, although the upper surfaces of its crude stone facing were largely visible once the leaves had been cleared from the ground surface. A higher central rear bank, or "bench," was located on the building's south side, indicating that this edifice actually faced north. Two areal excavations were placed over either end of the building ([Figure 18](#)) and a deeper cut was made on its axis ([Figure 19](#)).

Suboperation C156B was the areal excavation that covered the bulk of Structure B73. It measured roughly 5.8 m square. Excavation consisted primarily of humus removal from the upper surface of the building and exterior to the facing. However, a 1 m wide axial trench spanned the eastern side of the excavation ([Figure 19](#)), being interrupted only by a tree that was growing on axis to the building. No artifactual materials were recovered in primary association with Structure B73. However, as in other excavations in this area, human cranial material was recovered external to the northwest corner of the building. Suboperation C156B was backfilled at the conclusion of the field season.

Structure B71

Perhaps the most enigmatic building in the southwest walled area, Structure B71 surmounts a knoll that overlooks the entire landscape ([Figure 20](#)). It is bounded by a finely faced stone terrace at its juncture with the

site epicenter. While no stone facings were readily evident on the ground surface, two small excavations (Suboperations C157B and C157C) clearly revealed that this entire knoll was man-made. Terminal Classic ceramic materials included deep in the core of Structure B71's north wing lead to a tentative conclusion that the knoll represents an unfinished raised platform that was meant to support an acropolis complex like the Central Acropolis. It is proffered that further, and deeper, excavation into this locus would reveal buried constructions of an earlier date.

Suboperation C157B was a 5.5 m by 1.5 m probe on the eastern edge of Structure B71 ([Figure 20](#)). Only the humus was removed at this locale, involving excavation only to a maximum depth of 34 cm ([Figure 21](#)). The remains of a poorly preserved plaster floor were recovered in the western portion of this excavation, indicating that formal construction activity did take place here. Excavations during 2000 were halted at this floor level.

Suboperation C157C was an east-west trench placed over the Structure B71 northern extension (see [Figure 1](#)). As laid out the excavation measured 10 m east-west by 1.5 m north-south ([Figures 22 and 23](#)). Much of this trench removed only humus and penetrated the ground only to a depth of 20 to 25 cm. On the eastern side of the excavation, however, a depth of 1 m below ground surface was achieved. No architecture was recovered and, in fact, no large stones were found in this excavation. But, massive quantities of artifactual remains were produced. A human tooth was found in the humus layer and pieces of human cranium were recovered from within the fill levels. The lowest layer penetrated in the trench produced Terminal Classic sherd materials, suggesting that these fills may have resulted from a rebuilding effort that was underway, but that was never finished, during the Terminal Classic Period. Investigations were halted due to the quantity of artifactual remains that were being recovered from the fills (as all such items needed to be processed prior to the end of the 2000 field season).

Both excavations were fully backfilled.

"Mono" (or "Monolithic") Residential Group

The residential group immediately south of the southwest walled area was also investigated during the 2000 field season. This excavation was meant to provide control information that could be checked for differences and similarities to the information collected from the cruder line-of-stone buildings to the immediate north of this residential area. The group was nicknamed "Mono," which was short for "monolithic," a term applied as early as 1985 to this part of the site based on the large cut stone blocks that were evident in this group and the two other residential groups immediately to Mono's south.

Mono is situated atop a raised terrace and, in turn, is bounded by a formal platform on its northeast and southeast corners ([Figure 24](#)). The most massive structure in the group is the southern building, Structure B130, although the northern and eastern buildings are almost as tall as the southern construction. The squarish shape of the east building and its siting relative to the other buildings indicates that Mono is a "Type 1" east-structure-focused group (A. Chase and D. Chase 1987:54). Although an excavation was laid out over the northern building, Structure B128 (Suboperation C158C), no digging was ever undertaken at this locus. The west side of the platform exhibits a low building, Structure B126, in its northwest corner.

Structure B129

At first glance, the eastern building seemed to have been looted. Its axis was disturbed and appeared to have been penetrated by a crude trench. A large tree was located in the area of the frontal stairway and, thus, precluded a plaza level excavation to recover the base of the stairs. After investigation, it is now suspected that the axial disturbance east of this tree may have also been the result of a now decomposed fallen tree. An upper facing was visible on the summit of Structure B129 running north-south; it was tangent to the southern side of the axial trench and extended south for 2.4 m. No other structural facings could be discerned without excavation.

Suboperation C158B was an axial trench placed on the summit of Structure B129 measuring 5.9 m east-west by 1.5 m north-south ([Figure 25](#)). It encompassed the area that appeared to have been looted and extended from the base of the tree to the rear summit of the building. This investigation into the core of Structure B129 revealed earlier buried construction activity and indicated that a buried (and largely demolished) earlier version of

Structure B129 had a stairway located approximately 3.5 m behind the latest set of stairs. The coring for the latest version of Structure B129 consisted largely of unshaped rubble, often placed as dry stone fill. The coring for the earlier version of Structure B129 contained large stones, but significantly more soil. Excavations recovered six formally defined Special Deposits, two of which were human interments. Artifactual materials were plentiful within the building core; several largely complete or unique Late Classic ceramic pieces (see [Figures 28a, 28g, and 28f](#)) were found within this fill. Two partial vessels ([Figures 28b and 28d](#)) also were recovered in association with the plaster floor that abutted the base of the last step to the earlier summit level of Structure B129. The recovered deposits and ceramics indicate that the history of occupation at this locus minimally extended from the Early Classic through the Late Classic Periods.

Special Deposit C158B-1 consisted of a single ceramic container classified as part of a "finger bowl" cache elsewhere at Caracol (see A. Chase 1994; D. Chase and A. Chase 1998). The small bowl ([Figure 27a](#)) was located on a large stone amid dry core fill. It was surely not in its original location.

Special Deposit C158B-2 consisted of a single ceramic bowl also classified as a "finger bowl" cache vessel ([Figure 27b](#)). It was located in dry stone core fill. Although spatially separated from Special Deposit C158B-1 by approximately 1 m, it is likely that the two vessels formed part of the same cache and that this cache was later disturbed, resulting in the present placement of the two vessels.

Special Deposit C158B-3 was assigned for what appeared initially to be a whole vessel rim that was sealed by a buried floor. Excavation of the floor that abutted the upper step of the earlier version of Structure B129 revealed the side and top of a complete rim sealed beneath this surface. It was, therefore, designated as Special Deposit C158B-3. Further investigation showed that S.D. C158B-3 was just a complete jar rim ([Figure 28c](#)) included beneath the floor. It is likely that it was not a purposeful deposit, but rather an accidental fill placement.

Special Deposit C158B-4 was assigned for disarticulated skeletal remains that were strewn among the rocks forming the core for the latest version of Structure B129. These materials were located throughout the western part of the axial trench on and up to 30 cm above the lower plaza floor. It is suspected that these disarticulated remains were thrown into the fill at the time of construction of the latest version of Structure B129. The bones that were recovered represent the fragmentary remains of three individuals. One was a subadult about 7 years old at the time of death. The other two individuals were both adults, one of whom was male and one of whom exhibited possible porotic hyperostosis. One of the adults was between 25 and 35 years of age at death and the other was older than 35 and exhibited antemortem tooth loss, wear, and tartar.

Special Deposit C158B-5 was assigned for the excavation of a complete Early Classic basal flange bowl ([Figure 27c](#)) that was recovered deep in the southern coring for the earlier version of Structure B129. Exactly what Special Deposit C158B-5 represented and how it came to be in the fill cannot be determined. Either it was included in redeposited fill or it was, in fact, purposefully placed (and smashed).

Special Deposit C158B-6 was assigned to a tomb sealed deep within Structure B129. The tomb was sealed beneath a lower plaster floor that may have been an earlier plaza level and that was associated with an earlier version of Structure B129. The cut for the chamber penetrated an even earlier plaza floor, which ran under the earlier version of Structure B129. The tomb measured 1.76 m north-south by 0.6 m east-west ([Figure 26](#)). The chamber height was 0.6 m and the orientation of the tomb was 20 degrees east of north. Four ceramic vessels were recovered from the chamber, two dishes at either end ([Figures 27f and 27g](#)) and two bowls in between ([Figures 27d and 27e](#)). Part of a clam shell also came from the chamber. The bones were very eroded, but represented the fragmentary remains of at least three individuals: 1 adult and 2 subadults. The subadults were aged 2 years and 5 years at the time of death.

Suboperation C158E was placed immediately west of Structure B129 on top of a low line-of-stone feature that was barely evident in the plaza ([Figure 24](#)). The excavation measured 1.5 m east-west by 4 m north-south ([Figure 32](#)). When the humus was removed, a very disturbed low, roughly 2.8 m square, was revealed. Artifactual material associated with this platform included a large fragment of a ceramic "burner" ([Figure 28h](#)).

Structure B126 ([Figure 29](#))

Located at the northwest corner of Mono was a small building which exhibited several facings of finely cut stone. An areal excavation was placed over half of the building (Figure 30). Minimally two different building efforts relevant to Structure B126 were recovered in this areal excavation. Both indicated that Structure B126 was a bi-level edifice with a raised rear platform area and an extended frontal stair.

Suboperation C158D was placed over the southern half of Structure B126 and was excavated so as to reveal the line-of-stone facings which made up the structure. The excavation measured 6.16 m east-west by 3.75 m north-south (Figure 30). Only the humus was removed and there was no penetration of the building core. The axial section (Figure 31) clearly shows how the successive frontal stairs each consisted of a lower rear construction wall that was covered over by nicely faced masonry. There are hints of a third building effort as well. Several sherds of modeled-carved pottery, dating to the Terminal Classic era, were recovered in the humus level (Figure 28e). Ten pieces of worked burnt bone were also recovered.

Survey and Terraces

During the 2000 field season, further mapping of Caracol was undertaken by Timothy Murtha. The remainder of a 500 m wide north-south transect to Cohune was block-mapped, formally joining the Cohune Ridge settlement subset (and transect) to the main map. Two additional 500 m by 500 m blocks of settlement were also mapped near Chaquistero (Figure 33). Importantly, a causeway leading from the Chaquistero terminus back to the site epicenter was also found and partially mapped. Murtha also succeeded in mapping a square kilometer of terraces immediately east of Chaquistero to add to his dissertation sample. He also carried out a series of terrace excavations for this dissertation work and a report on these excavations is appended below.

Interpretations

One aspect of the Caracol Project investigations undertaken during the 2000 field season relates to the Classic Maya collapse and the ultimate abandonment of the Caracol site epicenter and its immediately adjacent settlement. All areas investigated in 2000 produced material that could be assigned a Terminal Classic date. Nearly all of the epicentral ring excavations produced human skeletal remains in humus lots with the exception of the control residential group "Mono." However, these human remains were not located in typical interments, but rather consisted of isolated material (particularly skull fragments and teeth) located during the clearing of plaza (and building) floors and alleys. This pattern is typical for Terminal Classic deposits found elsewhere (D. Chase and A. Chase 1982). In addition, the investigations showed the deposition of massive amounts of fill, presumably preparatory to new construction efforts, during the Terminal Classic Period. The Operation C157 locus is very suggestive of an incomplete building effort similar to others found at Caracol, such as those associated with Structure A7 as well as agricultural terraces south of the South Acropolis. Besides evidence of incomplete building efforts at Caracol, in past seasons the remains of an unburied child were recovered on an interior palace floor on Caana (A. Chase and D. Chase 1994) and a large amount of *de facto* artifactual material has been recovered in association with many of Caracol's epicentral palaces (A. Chase and D. Chase 2001b). C14 dates from burning associated with different palace buildings consistently date to approximately A.D. 890. This combined evidence, then, strongly suggests that the abandonment of the Caracol epicenter was a relatively sudden activity (D. Chase and A. Chase 2000).

The archaeological investigations undertaken at Caracol during 2000 suggest problems with directly using Landa's concentric model (Tozzer 1941) - in which greater distance from a site epicenter correlates with decreased social status - to describe Maya settlement at Caracol. These data instead provide some additional support for a modified Burgess (1925) model of concentric urban organization; following this contemporary-based model, a transitional area occurs near the center of cities that may contain either "factories" or the housing of lower status workers (or both; see also A. Chase et al. 2001). There are two basic lines of evidence that support an application of the Burgess model to Caracol. First, the worst diet at the site generally was found in groups ringing the epicenter (D. Chase et al. 1998). Second, evidence for manufacturing activities (or minimally for different specializations) occurred in many of these same epicentral ring groups, particularly those located within the southeast walled area. In the two residential groups tested within the eastern walled area,

archaeological data indicated that weaving was undertaken, that jadeite may have been worked, and that bone was carved and made into artifacts; one of the individuals living there also may have been a scribe or a sorcerer. The lithic activity recovered in association with Structure B74 adds to this activity corpus. And, the unusually high concentration of worked bone that was found in many of the building fills in the southwest walled area confirms that substantial bone-working was undertaken nearby (e.g., Moholy-Nagy 1997). Given the high concentration of diverse specializations within this section of Caracol (especially when viewed in combination with the poor diet), the traditional Landa concentric model for Maya urban organization must be questioned and the applicability of the more modern Burgess model to this data must be seriously considered.

The southwest walled area clearly contains structures that were non-residential, but that served some sort of special function (presumably in the realm of "support") for the urban epicenter. This area was in turn surrounded by a "ring" of residential groups that predominantly represent the houses of lower status specialists who supported the activities carried out in the site's epicentral palaces. Some of the residential groups that ring Caracol's epicenter, however, may have been of slightly higher status. Thus, the area likely housed retainers and independent producers positioned near their major consumers and markets. It seems likely that the population located immediately adjacent to the center of Caracol did not engage in more traditional farming practices (thus explaining the relative lack of corn in their diets). Yet, some of these individuals, through the advantage of their occupations and proximity to the site center, apparently had access to a wide variety of alternative foods (such as imported dried fish [thus explaining the high level of protein in some of their diets]). These data suggest the existence of a more dynamic urban population than has been suggested in the application of the traditional, Landa-derived concentric model.

Summary

The site of Caracol, Belize was one of the largest Classic Period (A.D. 250-800) Maya centers. The site itself covers some 177 square kilometers and had approximately 150,000 inhabitants in A.D. 675 (A. Chase and D. Chase 1994). Some 90 kilometers of internal roads once bound the site and its inhabitants together (D. Chase and A. Chase 2001). Since 1985 Caracol has been under continuous investigation by the University of Central Florida Caracol Archaeological Project (A. Chase and D. Chase 1987; D. Chase and A. Chase 1994). In 16 field seasons, many of the site's central buildings have been excavated and approximately 108 outlying residential groups have also been tested. The 2000 field season of the Caracol Archaeological Project focused on a conglomerate of structures surrounded by walls and parapets that is located immediately south of the site epicenter and that has proved intriguing since its discovery in 1983. Physically separated from the epicentral architecture of Caracol by a gated wall, the Conchita Causeway divides this southern walled area into two distinct settlement zones. Two residential groups within the southeast walled area had already been investigated; both groups produced tombs and evidence of a variety of occupational specializations. Stable isotope analysis of interments recovered in one of these groups revealed a diet distinct from that found in interments recovered in the site epicenter; this pattern, however, is consistent with burials recovered from other residential groups ringing the epicenter. The southwest walled area contains more structures, arranged in a far less regular pattern, than the southeast area. None of these buildings had been excavated. Investigations in this southwest walled area during 2000, however, revealed archaeological data that is both consistent with that from the southeast walled area (at least in terms of evidence for occupational activity areas) and that also amplifies these data. The buildings within Caracol's southwest walled area are distinct enough to suggest that this area was not lived in, but rather functioned as a special urban area. These same data also suggest that this area was in use until the epicentral collapse. The data recovered during the 2000 field season, when combined with previous season's fieldwork, provides substantial information from which to view the structure and composition of ancient Maya urban forms.

TABLE 1:

Caracol Project Members: 2000 Field Season

Staff:

Arlen Chase C1

Diane Chase C2

Amy Morris C111

Tim Murtha C88

Lynne Etheridge C130

Lucas Johnson C134

Corey Maggiano C135

Elizabeth Potter C136

Heather Reay C137

Willie Rivers C138

Samantha Sciarrino C139

Lyndsey Wood C140

Steve Barry C141

Belizean Labor:

Rita Wiltshire

Aurora Gongora

Sandra Gongora

Mariam E. Mendez

Carlos Mendez

Eric Manzanero

Carlos Castillo Garcia

Rolando Can

Luisbin Espana

Jaime Iglesias Mis (Moguel)

Oscar Pineda

Ubildo Howe

Elmer (Nestor) Ramirez

Jorge Rene Esquivel

Martin Mendez

FIGURES

Figure 1. Plan of the locations of the 2000 excavations within the southwest walled area.

Figure 2. Photograph of Suboperation C152C located in the alley between Structures B82 and B83 looking west.

Figure 3. Photograph of axial trench, Suboperation C152B, through Structure B83 looking west.

Figure 4. Plan of Structure B83 showing locations of Suboperations C152C and C152B.

Figure 5. Section of Suboperation C152B, an axial trench through Structure B83.

Figure 6. Ceramic vessels associated with Structures B83 and B84: a) C152C/3-7; b) C152B/4-6; c) C154B/8-1; d) C154B/6-5; e) C154B/11.

Figure 7. Photograph of Structure B80 looking southeast.

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Figure 26. Plan of Special Deposit C158B-6, a tomb in Structure B129.

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APPENDIX:

Cohune Ridge Archaeological Settlement Survey

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The purpose of the Cohune Ridge Archaeological Settlement Survey was to define the relationship between households and agricultural features, roughly 5 kms north of the Caracol epicenter ([figure 1](#)). As survey was carried out, it became clear that how the households related to one another, as well as to elite architecture and causeways was equally important. During the 1998, 1999 and 2000 field seasons, settlement survey, excavation and soil sampling was carried out in order to evaluate these questions. During the spring of 2000 between

February 19th and March 22nd, I completed dissertation research in the Cohune Ridge Region of the archaeological site of Caracol, Belize. This season's fieldwork continued and completed roughly 4 km² of settlement survey, 2.1 km² of terrace and intensive agricultural survey, 185 soil samples and 21 excavations in a variety of contexts. During the 2000 season specifically, 660 m² of settlement survey, 1.1 km² of terrace survey, 17 excavations, and 150 soil samples were completed. The following report details the specifics of all fieldwork completed during the 2000 field season.

Settlement Survey

During the 2000 field season, roughly 660 m² of settlement were added to the already 3.5 km² portion of settlement completed during the 1998-99 field seasons ([figure 2](#)). The survey completed a 1 km² section of settlement located south and east of Chaquistero. One south baseline transect and two east and west baseline transects were cut and surveyed providing the known points for gridding of the area. Along the south baseline, brechas were cut and cleared every 50 meters to the north. Every visible archaeological feature was then located and surveyed, therefore tied into the overall settlement map using a TOPCON GTS 212 Total Station. In total 16 plaza groups containing a variety of structures and 2 aguadas were surveyed in this portion of settlement.

Terrace Survey

During the 2000 field season, roughly 1.1 km² of terraces and intensive agricultural features were surveyed using a Brunton compass and tape. The area was located between the 2500 and 3600 meter marks on the east/west transect south for 900 meters and north for 100 meters ([figure 3](#)). In total a large portion of the terracing surveyed (roughly 80 %) were identified as contour terracing, whereas a small percentage or (20%) were identified as cross-channel/weir terraces. The terraces range in height from .3 m high to over 1.5 meters high. The layout and construction size of the terraces is likely due to the natural conditions, i.e. slope, elevation and soil properties, as well as social conditions, i.e. land use and ownership.

Soil Sampling

During the 2000 field season, 136 soil samples from a variety of contexts were retrieved to evaluate the soil properties of the Cohune Ridge Settlement. Seventy-one (71) samples were retrieved directly from terrace contexts. These samples are intended to evaluate the association of soil characteristics and the actual terraces themselves. Sixty-five (65) soil samples were extracted from a .5 km² grid located just west of the ruins of Cohune. These soil samples were retrieved in order to illustrate the local diversity of soils within a .5 km² area sectioned off into 1 hectare grid squares. Context and location of the samples were recorded during sampling and surveyed with the total station. The samples will be added to the database of soil retrieved during the 1999 season and exported during the 2000 season.

Excavation

During the 2000 season 17 excavations between 1 m² and 4 m² were completed to fully evaluate the connection between intensive agricultural features and settlement in the Cohune Ridge Region of Caracol. Nine excavations were placed directly over the actual terrace walls, whereas eight were located in the areas located directly behind terraces (the growing surface). Of the 9 excavations directly associated with terrace walls, four were placed on weir/cross-channel terracing. Five excavations were placed in association with contour terracing of a variety of sizes. The eight other excavations (1X1 meter test pits) were located in close association to the terrace wall excavations. A variety of soil samples were retrieved from the excavations as well as a number of diagnostic sherds, which will be useful to evaluate dating of the construction and/or use of the terraces.

C159A ([figure 4](#) and [figure 9](#))

Sub-operation C159A was a 2 meter by 1 meter contour terrace excavation located roughly 100 meters south of the eastern structure at Chaquistero. Prior to excavation the terrace was roughly .66 meters high. After excavation, it was evident that the terrace had collapsed in areas, yet was roughly .5 meters high. A relatively high concentration of sherds was retrieved from this sub-op. Two major soil horizons were identified in this

excavation, i.e. humus and sub. The humus was a black clayey soil with a high organic, where as the sub soil was a dark brown, extremely clayey soil with very few rocks. The terrace wall was faced with large shaped limestone and supported by a construction wall of small limestone fill. Excavations revealed a previous construction wall, which is evident in the profile.

C159B([figure 4](#) and [figure 9](#))

C159B was a 2 X 1 meter contour terrace excavation located roughly 10 meters south of sub-operation C159A. The pit was excavated to an average depth of 120 cm. Prior to excavation the terrace was identified as roughly .75 meters high. After excavation, it was evident that the terrace had experienced some minor collapse, and constructed of modified bedrock and large shaped limestone. A small concentration of artifacts was retrieved from this test, including no diagnostic sherds. Two major soil horizons were identified including humus and subsoil.

C159C([figure 4](#) and [figure 10](#))

C159C was a 1 X 1 meter test pit located between C159A and C159B. The pit was excavated to an average depth of .25 meters. Two major soil horizons were identified including humus and sub. The subsoil was extremely clayey and contained no real limestone inclusions. One undiagnostic sherd was retrieved from the two distinct lots.

C159D([figure 4](#) and [figure 10](#))

C159D was a 1 X 1 meter test pit located roughly 5 meters north of C159A. The pit was excavated to an average depth of .85 meters. Two major soil horizons were identified including humus and sub. The subsoil was extremely clayey and contained no real limestone inclusions. One undiagnostic sherd and one lithic was retrieved from the two distinct lots.

C159E([figure 5](#) and [figure 10](#))

C159E was a 2 X 1 meter contour terrace excavation located roughly 10 meters south of the Chaquistero/Cohune road and 140 meters east of the road junction. The pit was excavated to an average depth of 80 cm. Prior to excavation the terrace was identified as roughly .5 meters high. After excavation, it was evident that the terrace was constructed of large shaped limestone supported by a construction wall of small 'fill' limestone. A relatively high concentration of artifacts was retrieved from this test, including 2 diagnostic sherds. Two major soil horizons were identified including humus and subsoil. Again the subsoil was extremely clayey and had very few limestone inclusions.

C159F([figure 5](#) and [figure 10](#))

C159F was a 1 X 1 meter test pit located 30 meters north of C159E. The pit was excavated to an average depth of .40 meters. Two major soil horizons were identified including humus and sub. The subsoil was extremely clayey and contained no real limestone inclusions. Few artifacts were retrieved from the excavation, including no diagnostics.

C159G([figure 5](#) and [figure 10](#))

C159G was a 1 X 1 meter test pit located 10 meters north of C159F. The pit was excavated to an average depth of .55 meters. Two major soil horizons were identified including humus and sub. The subsoil was extremely clayey and contained no real limestone inclusions. Few artifacts were retrieved from the excavation, including no diagnostics.

C159H([figure 6](#) and [figure 11](#))

C159H was a 1 X 1 meter test pit located 10 meters east of a plaza group and roughly 50 meters north of the

Cohune Road. The pit was excavated to an average depth of .52 meters. Two major soil horizons were identified including humus and sub. The subsoil was extremely clayey and contained no real limestone inclusions. A high concentration of artifacts, namely sherds, was retrieved from one lot. The bedrock was extremely powdery, indicating the possibility of water drainage. Two diagnostic sherds were retrieved.

C159I([figure 6](#) and [figure 11](#))

C159I was a 1 X 1 meter test pit located 20 meters east of C159H. The pit was excavated to an average depth of .52 meters. Two major soil horizons were identified including humus and sub. The subsoil was extremely clayey and contained no real limestone inclusions. The bedrock was extremely powdery, indicating the possibility of water drainage. Few artifacts were retrieved from the excavation, including no diagnostics.

C159J([figure 6](#) and [figure 11](#))

C159J was a 2.5 meter X 1 meter weir terrace excavation located roughly 8 meters south of C159I. Prior to excavation the terrace appeared to be collapsed. After excavation, it was clear that the terrace was little more than large shaped limestone with modified bedrock. A moderate concentration of artifacts was retrieved from the two distinct lots, including one diagnostic. Two major soil horizons were identified, including humus and subsoil.

C159K([figure 6](#) and [figure 12](#))

C159K was a 2 meter X 1 meter weir/contour terrace excavation located roughly 30 meters south of C159J. Prior to excavation the terrace appeared to be roughly .60 meters high. After excavation, it was clear that the terrace was a combination of modified bedrock and shaped limestone. A moderate concentration of artifacts was retrieved from the two distinct lots, including one diagnostic sherd. Two major soil horizons were identified, including humus and subsoil.

C159L([figure 6](#) and [figure 12](#))

C159L was a 1 X 1 meter test pit located 20 meters north of C159K. The pit was excavated to an average depth of .35 meters. Two major soil horizons were identified including humus and sub. The subsoil was extremely clayey and contained no real limestone inclusions. The bedrock was extremely powdery, indicating the possibility of water drainage. Few artifacts were retrieved from the excavation, including 2 diagnostic sherds from two distinct lots.

C159M([figure 6](#) and [figure 12](#))

C159M was a 2 meter X 1 meter contour terrace excavation located roughly 20 meters west of C159L. Prior to excavation the terrace appeared to be roughly .50 meters high. After excavation, it was clear that the terrace was constructed from roughly shaped limestone supported by a construction wall with limestone fill. A small concentration of artifacts was retrieved from the two distinct lots, including no diagnostic sherds. Two major soil horizons were identified, including humus and subsoil.

C159N([figure 7](#) and [figure 9](#))

C159N was a 1.5 meter X 1 meter contour terrace excavation located roughly 45 meters north of the intersection of the east/west and the north/south transect. Prior to excavation the terrace appeared to be roughly .50 meters high. After excavation, it was clear that the terrace was constructed from roughly shaped limestone supported by a construction wall with limestone fill. A small concentration of artifacts was retrieved from the two distinct lots, including no diagnostic sherds. Two major soil horizons were identified, including humus and subsoil.

C159O([figure 7](#) and [figure 13](#))

C159O was a 1 X 1 meter test pit located 5 meters south of C159N. The pit was excavated to an average depth of

.55 meters. Two major soil horizons were identified including humus and sub. The subsoil was extremely clayey and contained no real limestone inclusions. The excavation was terminated prior to encountering bedrock, because of the low concentration of sherds found in lot C159O/2.

C159P([figure 8](#) and [figure 13](#))

C159P was a 4 meter X 1 meter weir terrace excavation located roughly 150 meters east of the 4250 stake on the north/south Cohune Transect, which was reopened in 1999. Prior to excavation the terrace appeared to be roughly 1.5 meters high, revealing two walls (double decker). After excavation, it was clear that the terrace was constructed from two large roughly shaped limestone walls supported by two construction walls with limestone fill and clay mortar. A small concentration of artifacts was retrieved from the four distinct lots, including one diagnostic sherds. Three major soil horizons were identified, including humus and subsoil.

C159Q([figure 8](#) and [figure 13](#))

C159Q was a 3 meter X 1 meter weir terrace excavation located roughly 15 meters south of sub-operation C159P. Prior to excavation the terrace appeared to be roughly .50 meters high and possible associated with a drainage canal feeding water to the terrace below. After excavation, it was clear that the terrace was constructed from roughly shaped limestone supported by a construction wall with limestone fill. A small concentration of artifacts was retrieved from the two distinct lots, including no diagnostic sherds. Three major soil horizons were identified, including humus, subsoil and a layer of decaying bedrock, which suggests that although no formal drainage wall was constructed the terrace was utilized for diversion and channeling of water.

Appendix 1. Lot Contents for excavation completed during the 2000 field season.

Lot ID	Undiagnostic Ceramics	Diagnostic Ceramics	Lithics	Ceramic Notes	Lithic Notes
C159A/1	4		1		Undiagnostic with cortex
C159A/2	16	1	1	1 Early Classic Handle	1 Secondary Flake Single Facet
C159A/3	69	1	1	1 Orange Ware	Hammer Stone
C159A/4	46	11		2 Sierra Red Preclassic 5 Mars Orange Ware 4 Unknown Diagnostic Rim Sherds	
C159B/1	3				
C159B/2	9		1		Undiagnostic with cortex
C159C/2	1				
C159D/1			1		Undiagnostic without cortex Broken Platform Secondary Flake Flake Tool?
2C159D/2	1				

C159E/1	18				
C159E/2	24	3	3	1 Striated Jar 1 Early Classic Bowl Rim	1 Raw Material Test 1 Core 1 Undiagnostic with cortex
C159F/1	4				
C159F/2	5		1		Undiagnostic without cortex Broken Platform
C159G/1	2				
C159G/2	1				
C159H/1	206	2		Early Classic Small Flange Ring Base From Plate	1 piece of slate
C159I/2	5				
C159J/1	28				
C159J/2	34	1		Early Classic Basal Flange	
C159K/1	16	1	1	Early Classic Basal Flange	Undiagnostic
C159K/2	25	1		Belize Red from Footed Bowl -- Late Classic	
C159L/1	5	2		Early Classic Basal Flange Eroded Belize Red Local Variety, Notched Flanged Plate	
C159M/2	12		1		1 piece of slate
C159O/2	1				
C159P/2	4	1		Belize Red Late Classic	
C159Q/2	4				
C159Q/3	1				

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[Figure 8.](#) Location of Operations C159 P and Q.

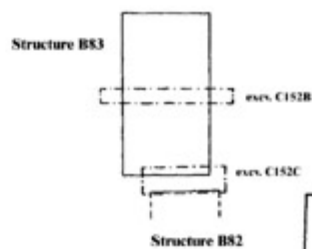
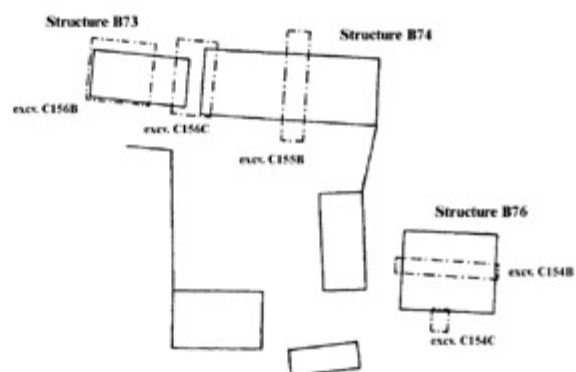
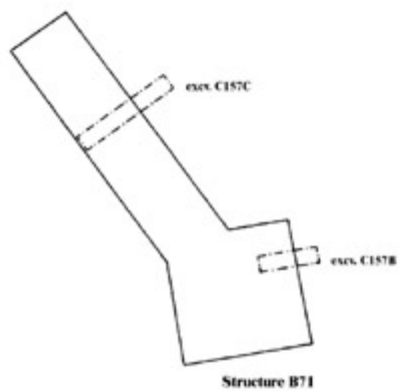
[Figure 9.](#) Sections of Operations C159 A, B and N.

[Figure 10.](#) Sections of Operations C159 C, D, E, F, and G.

[Figure 11.](#) Sections of Operations C159 H, I and J.

[Figure 12.](#) Sections of Operations C159 K, L and M.

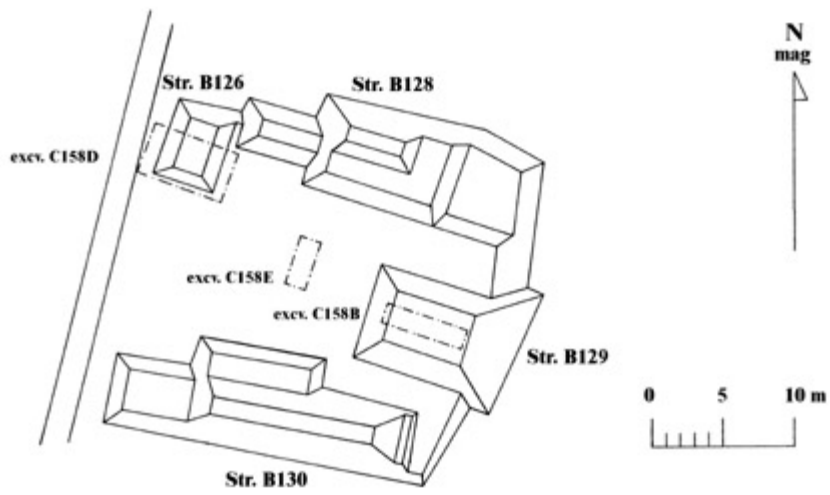
[Figure 13.](#) Sections of Operations C159 O, P and Q.



CARACOL
SOUTHWEST WALLED AREA

CARACOL

"Mono" residential group



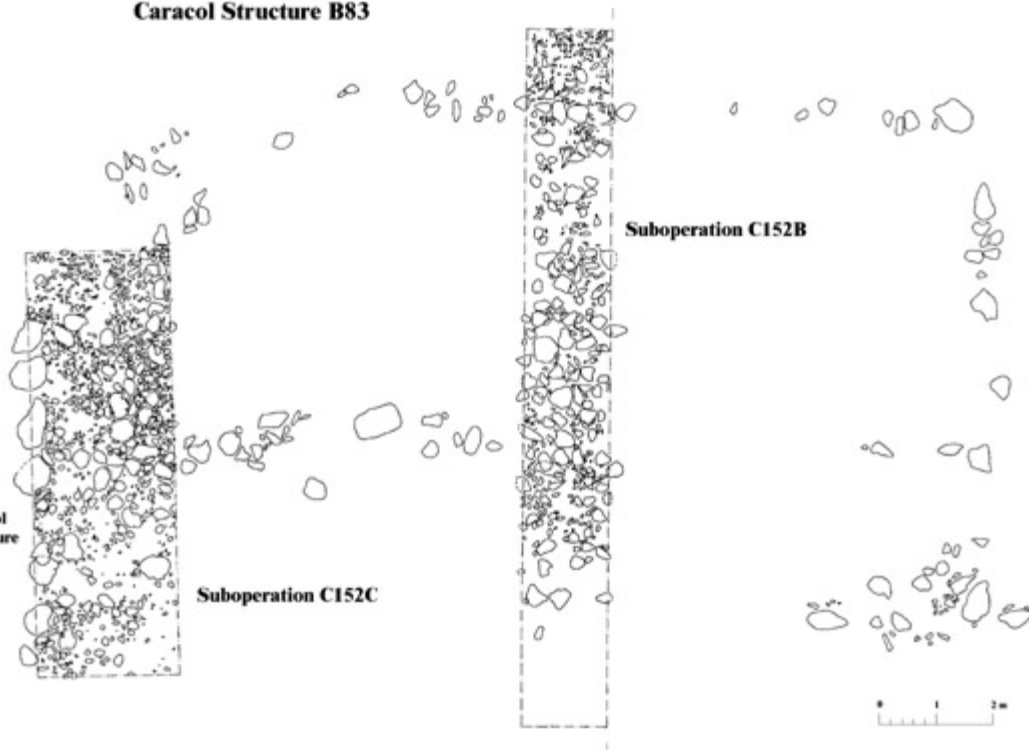
Caracol Structure B83

**Caracol
Structure
B82**

Suboperation C152C

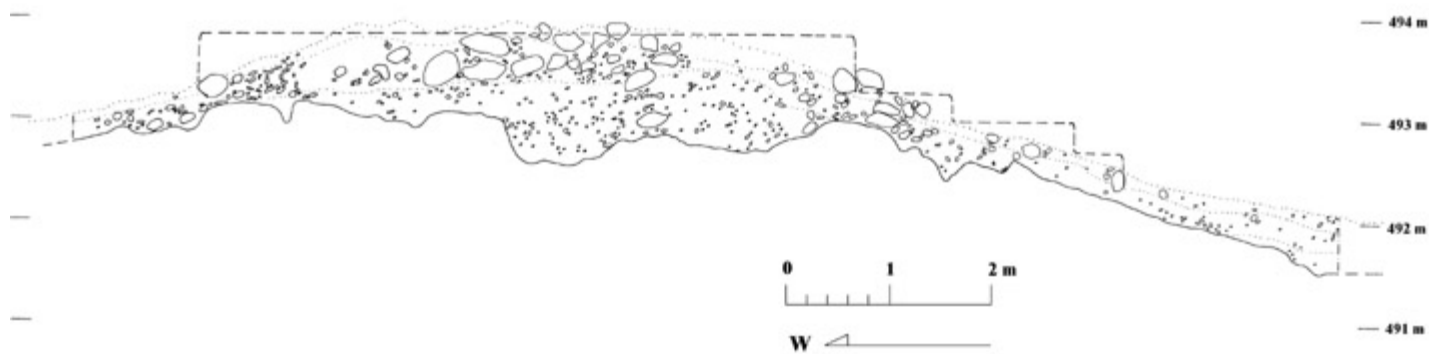
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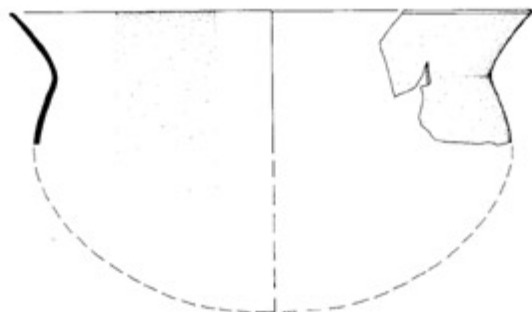
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Caracol Structure B83
Suboperation C152B



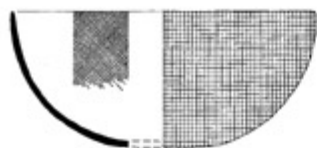


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a



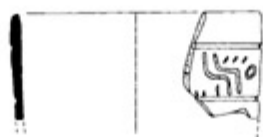
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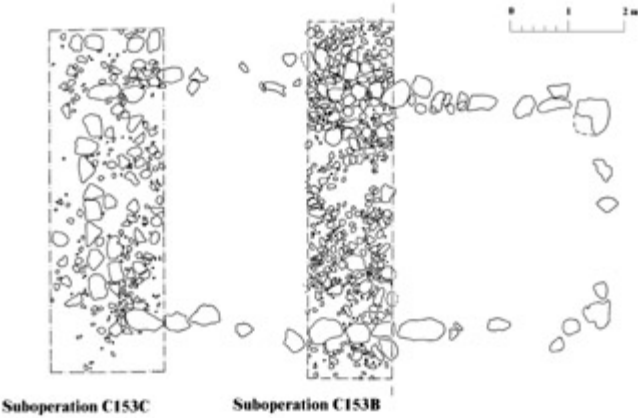


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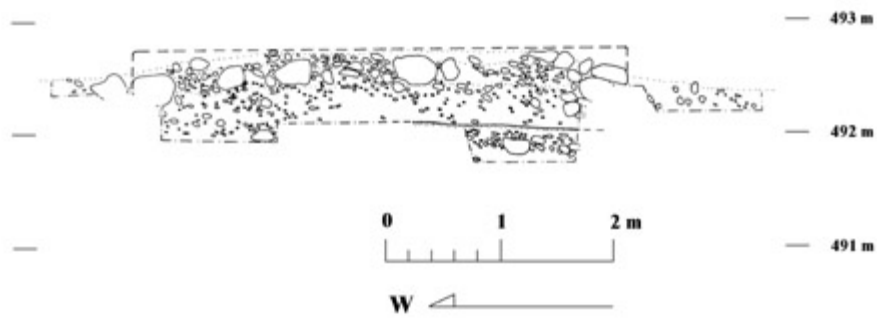


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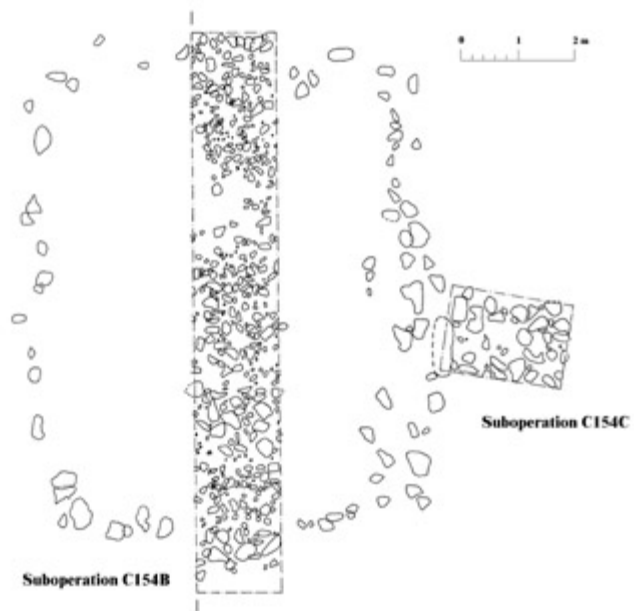
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Suboperation C153B



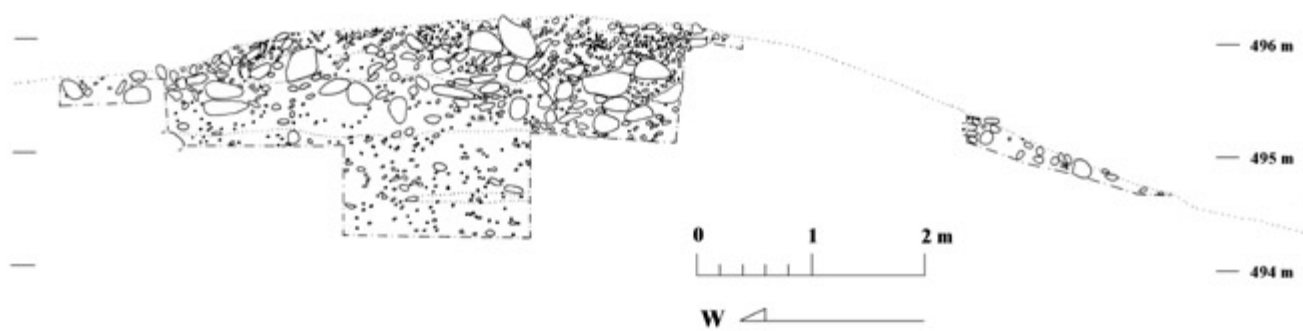


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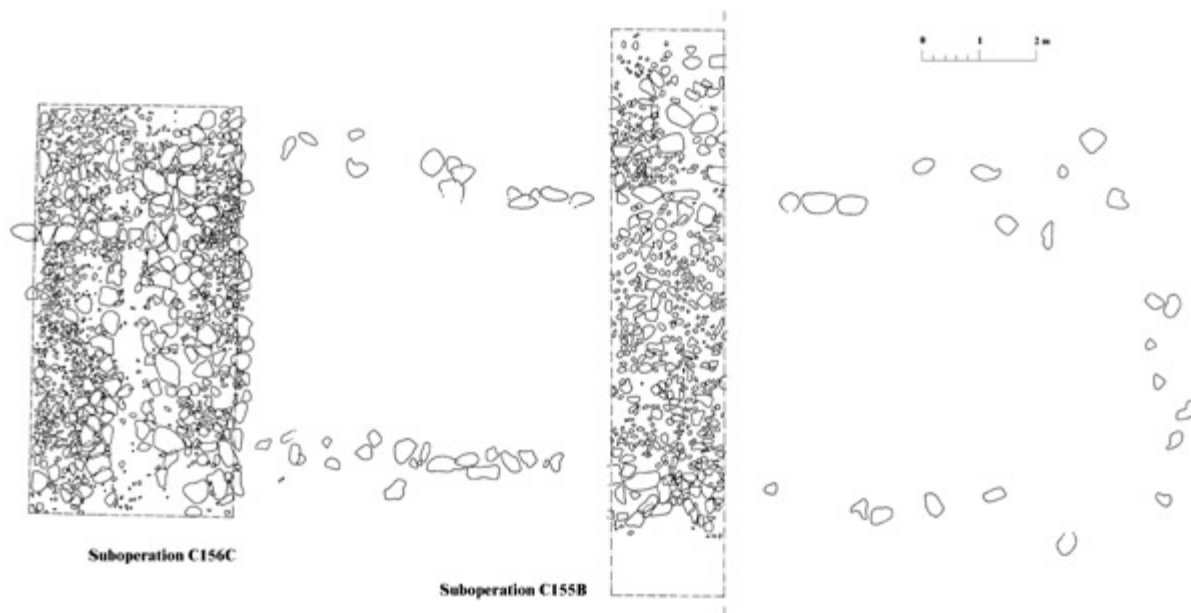


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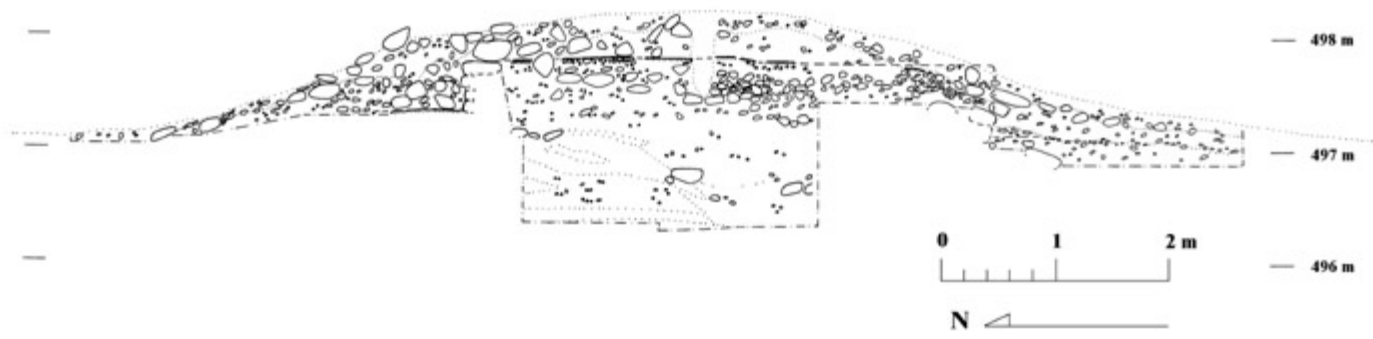


Caracol Structure B74



Caracol Structure B74

Suboperation C155B

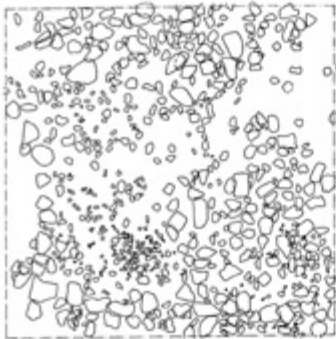




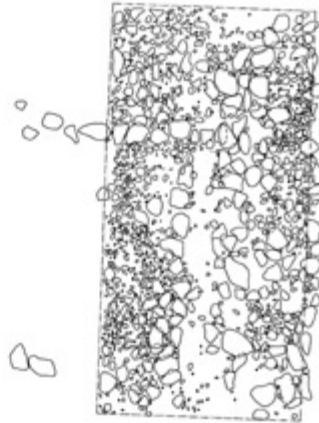




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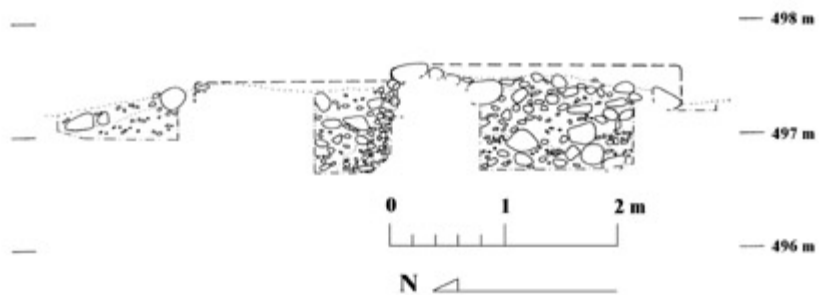


Suboperation C156B



Suboperation C156C

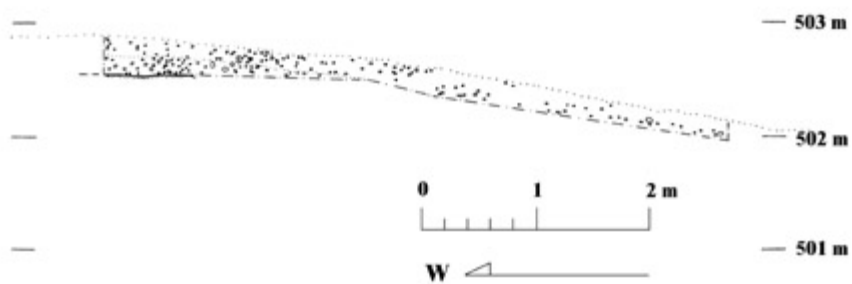
Caracol Structure B73
Suboperation C156B





Caracol Structure B71

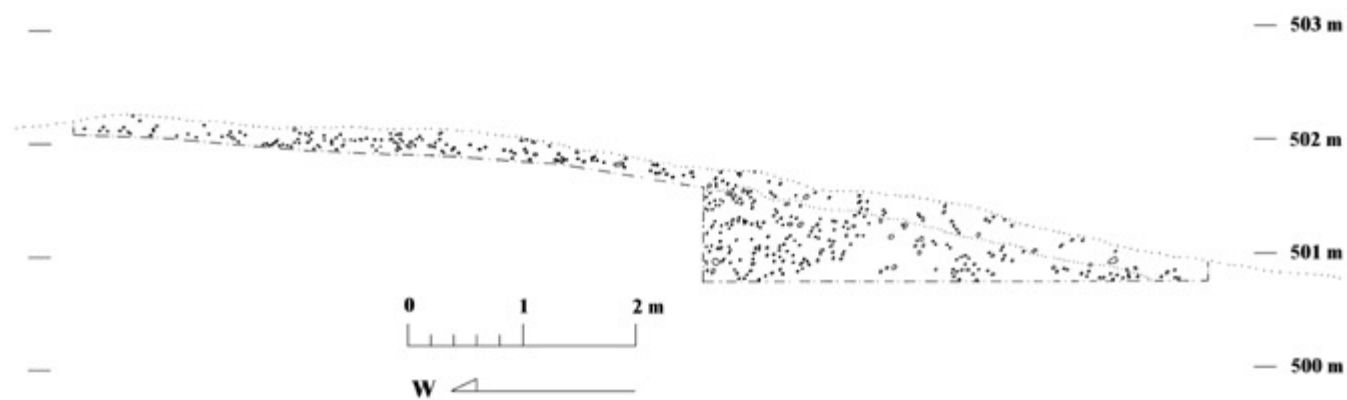
Suboperation C157B





Caracol Structure B71 north wing

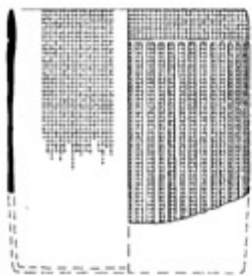
Suboperation C157C



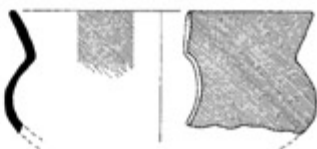
Caracol Structure B129

Suboperation C158B

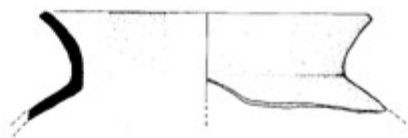




a



b



c



d

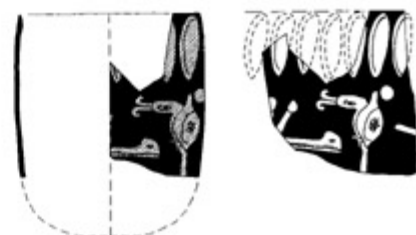


e

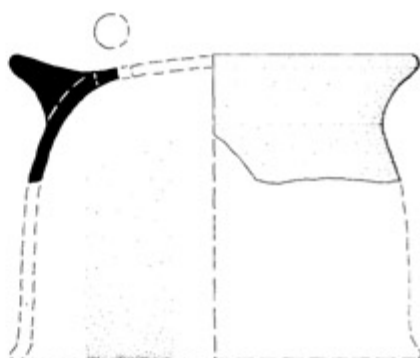


f

0 1 2 cm



g



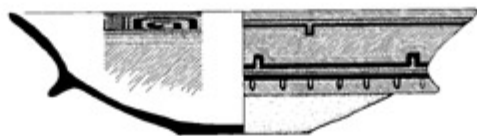
h



a



b



c

0 1 2 cm



d



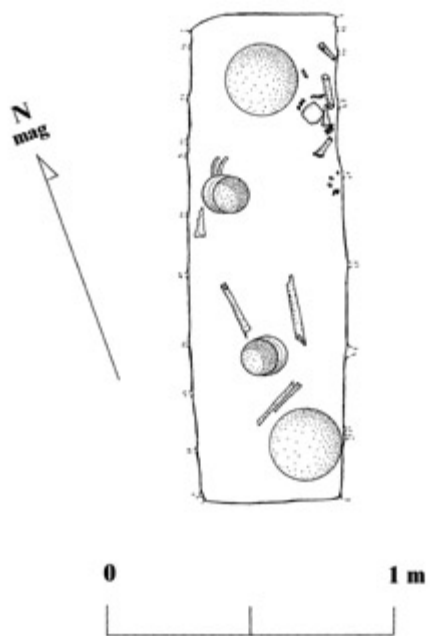
e



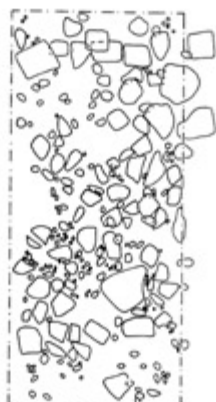
f



g



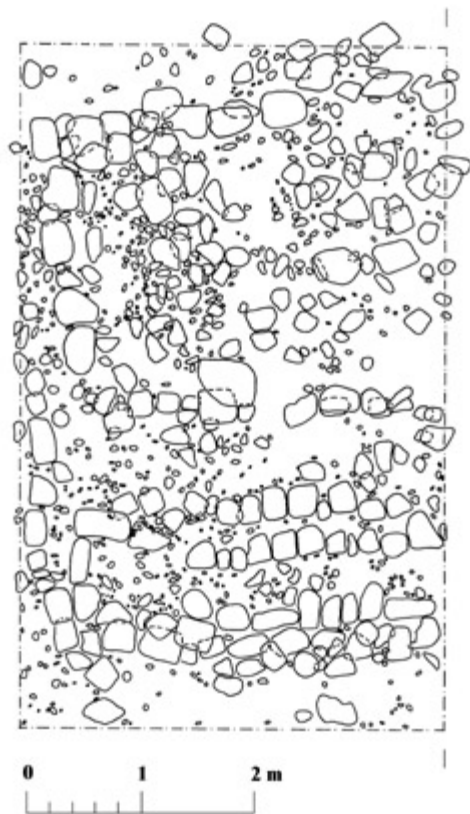
Suboperation C158E





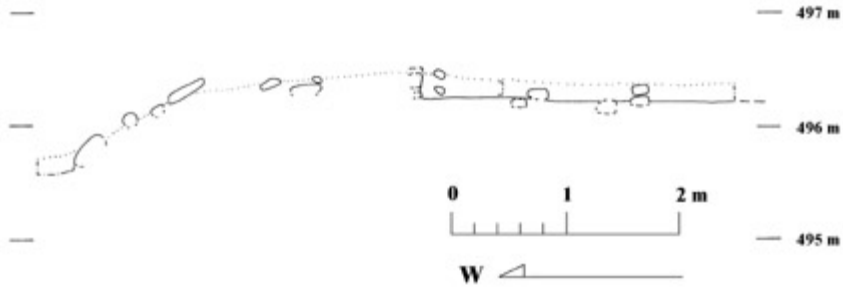
Caracol Structure B126

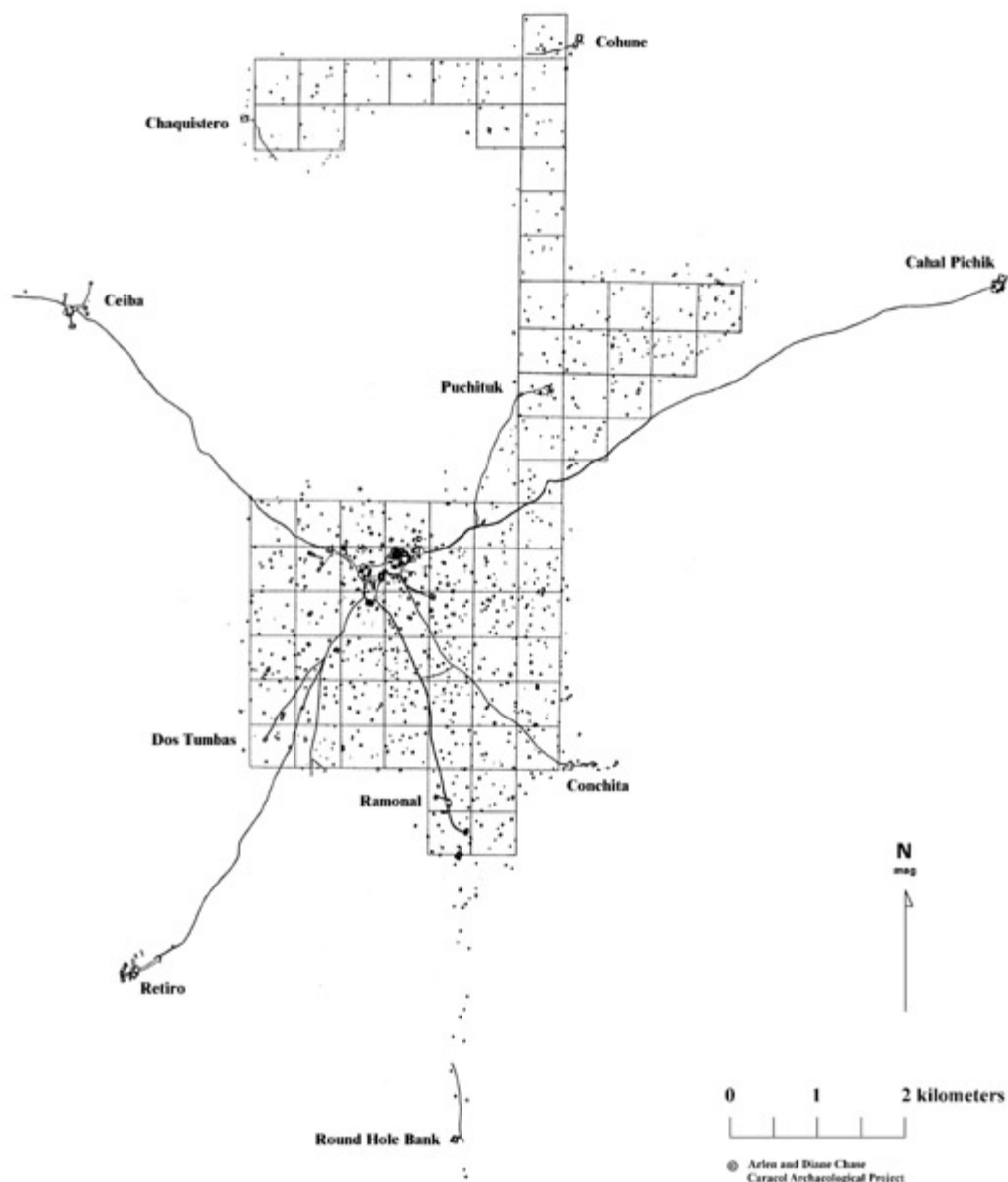
Suboperation C158D



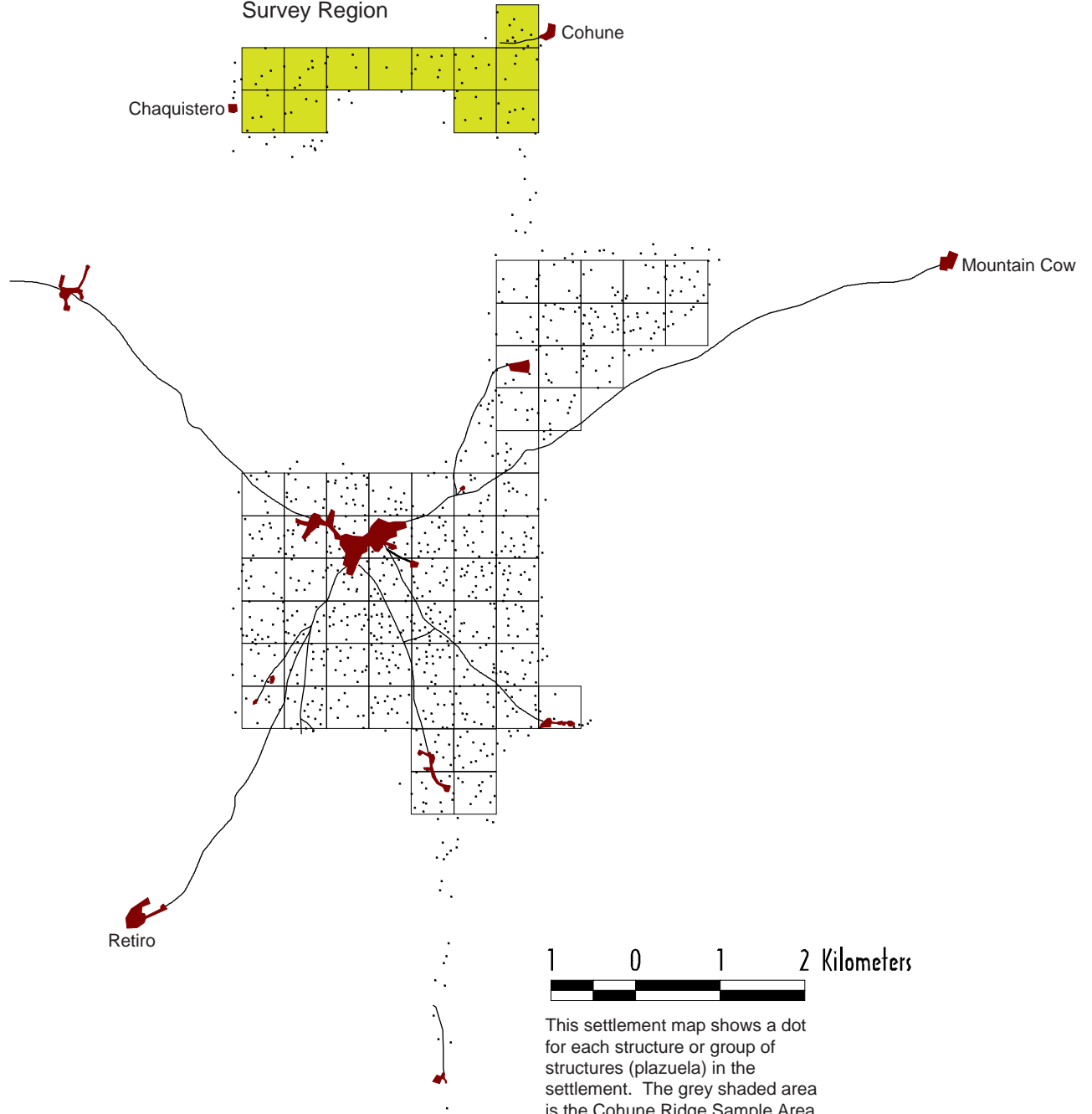
Caracol Structure B126

Suboperation C158D



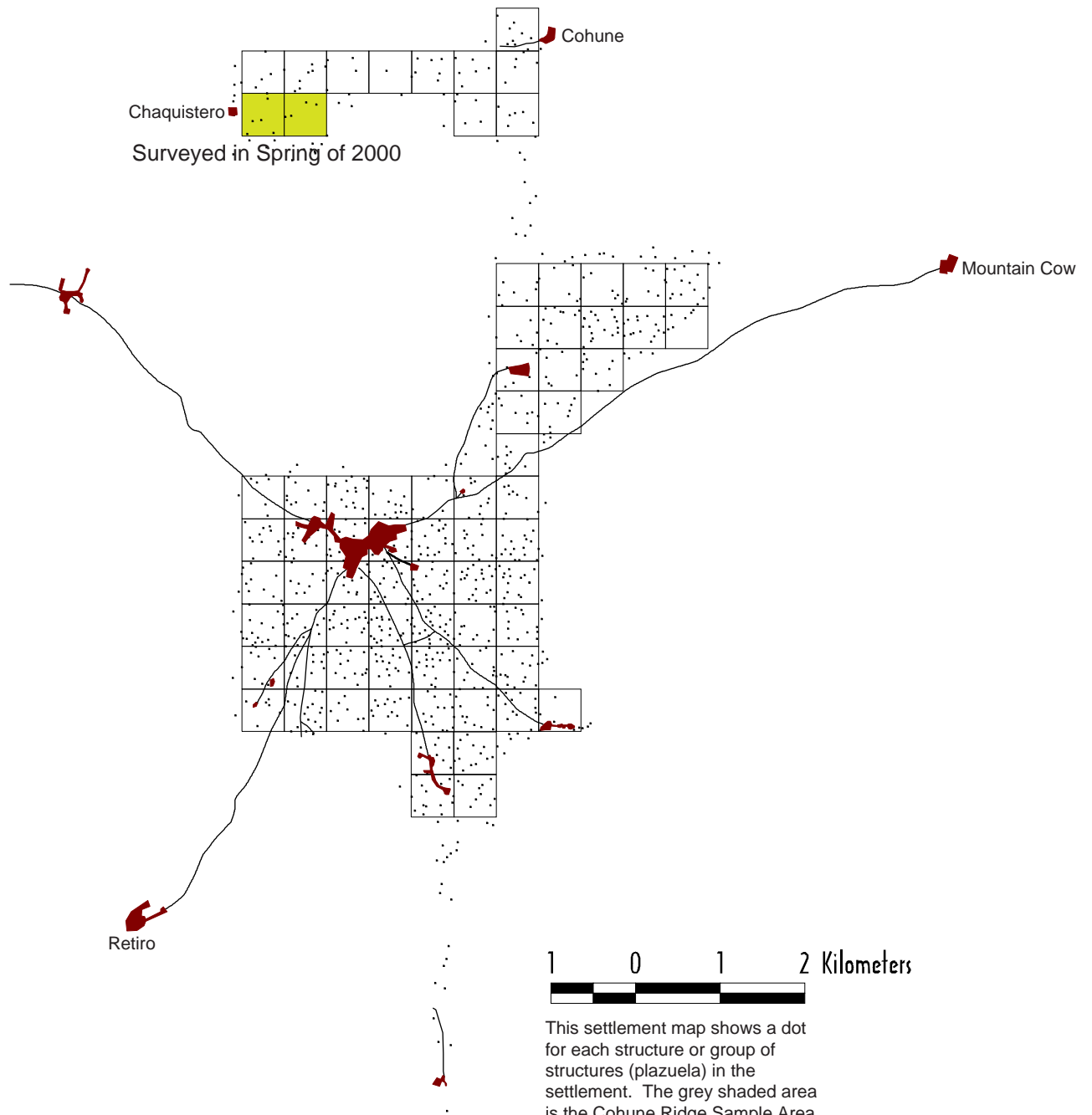


Cohune Ridge
Archaeological Settlement
Survey Region

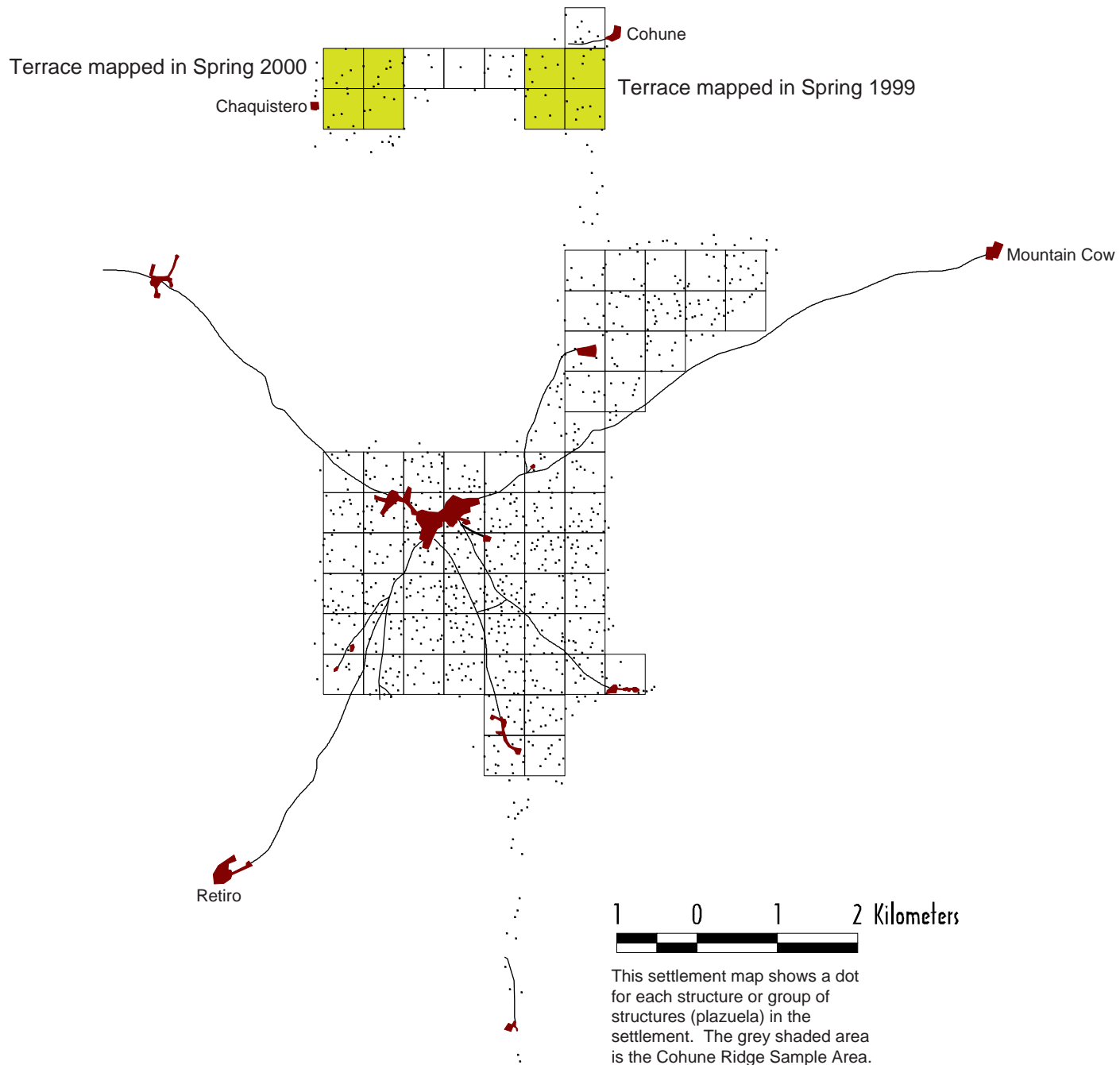


1 0 1 2 Kilometers

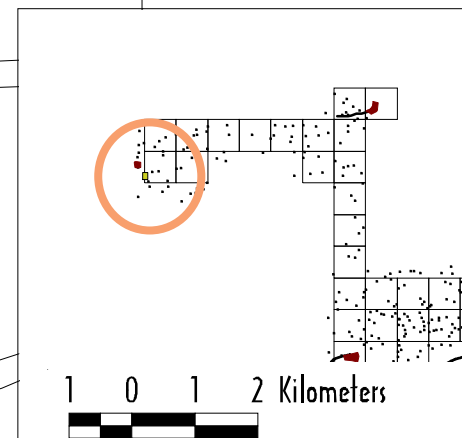
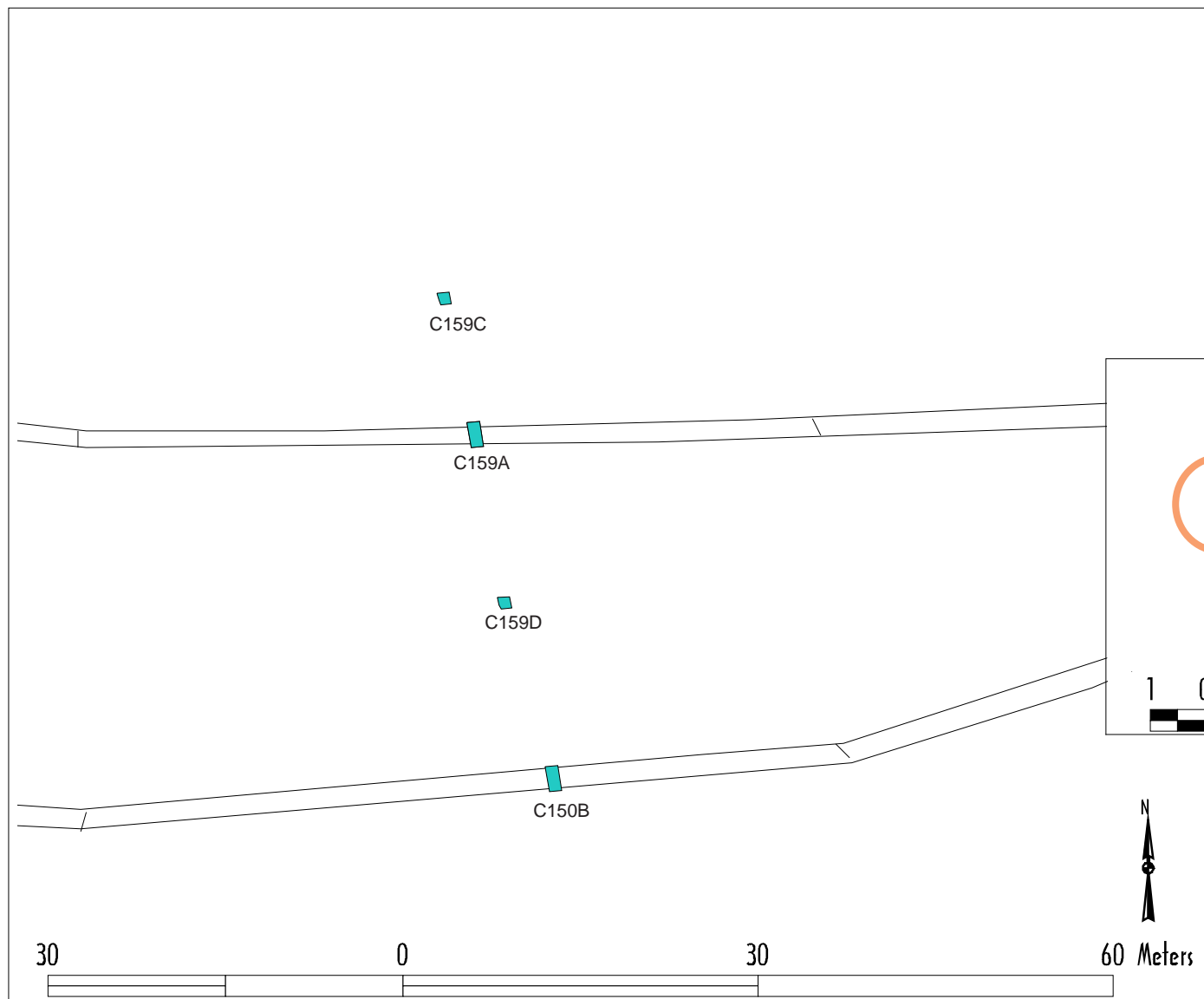
This settlement map shows a dot for each structure or group of structures (plazuela) in the settlement. The grey shaded area is the Cohune Ridge Sample Area. Each square is .25 km². Large architecture is represented by shaded polygons. Magnetic North is to the top of the page. Map based upon 1999 Caracol Map reported by Chase and Chase.



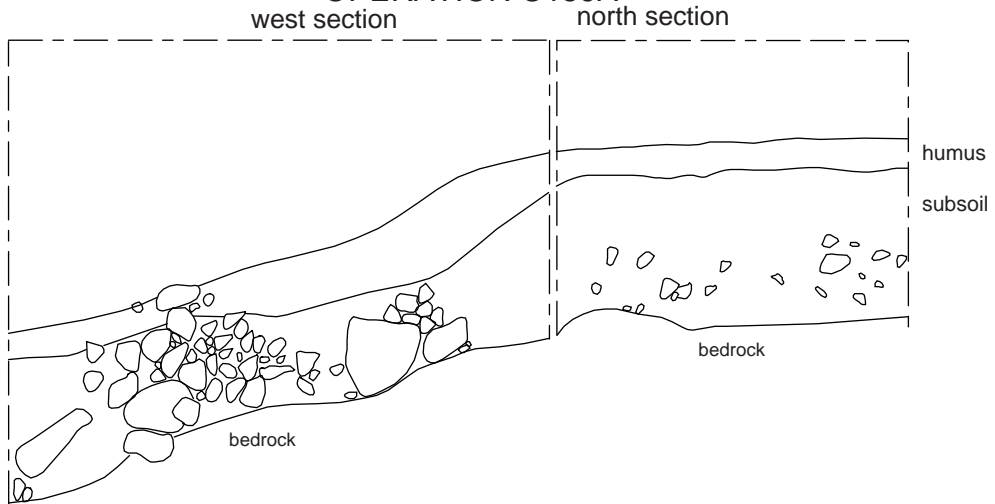
Surveyed in Spring of 2000



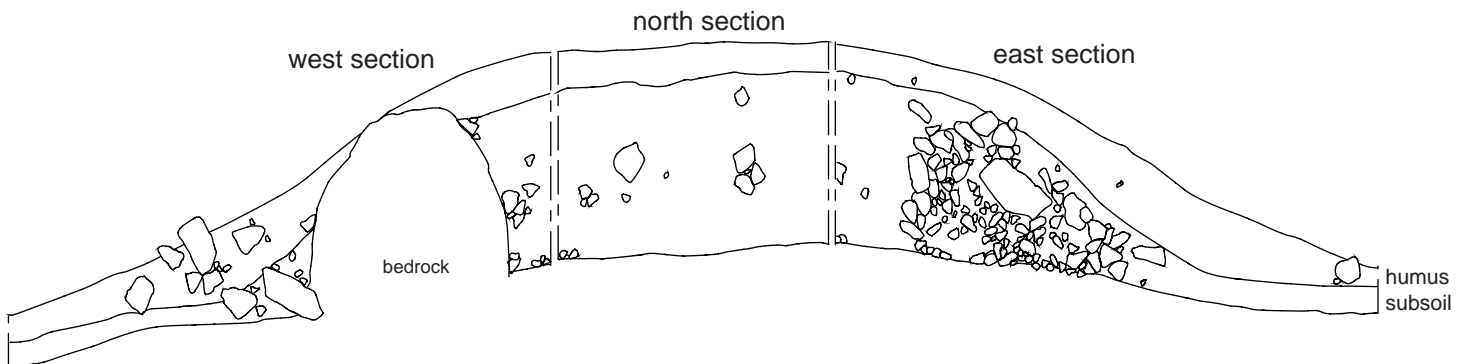
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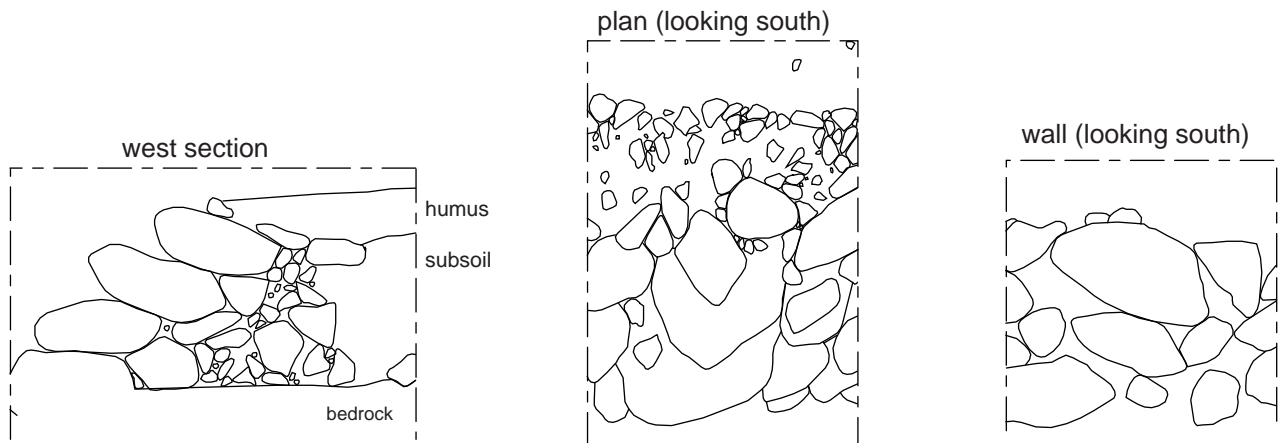
OPERATION C159A



OPERATION C159B



OPERATION C159N

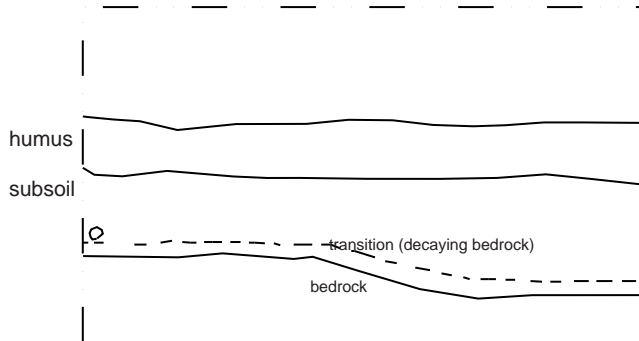


1 meter

1 meter

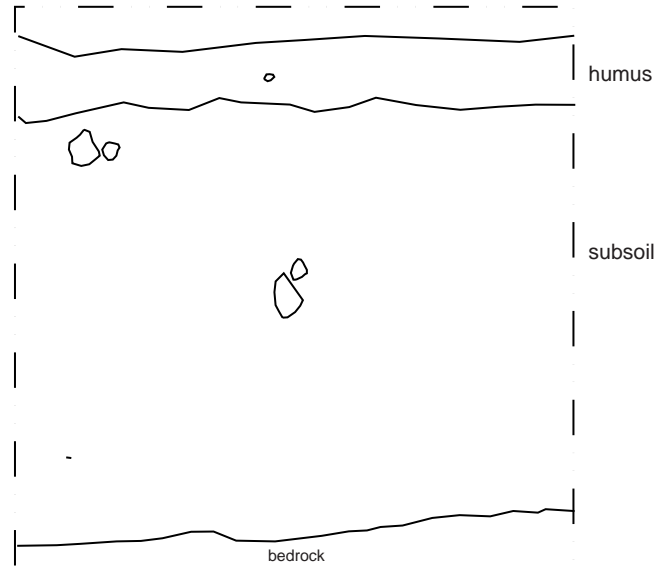
OPERATION C159C

north section



OPERATION C159D

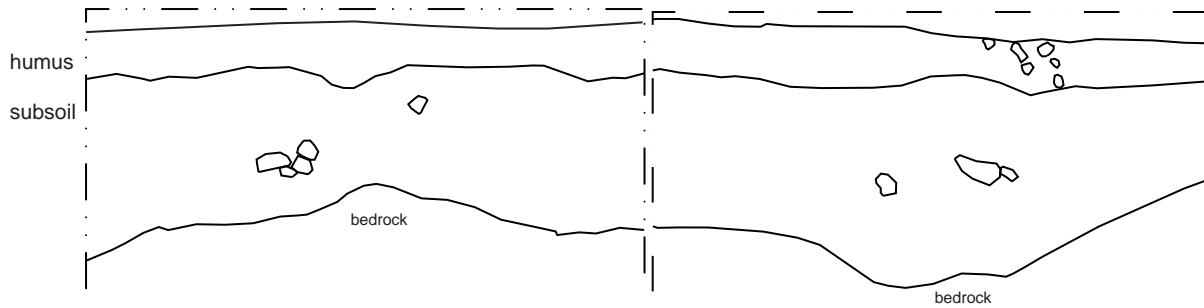
north section



OPERATION C159E

north section

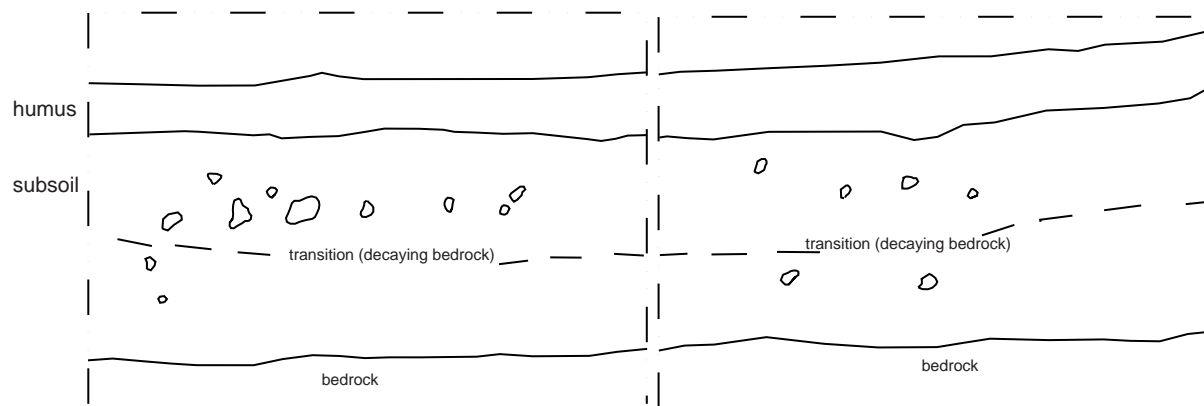
east section

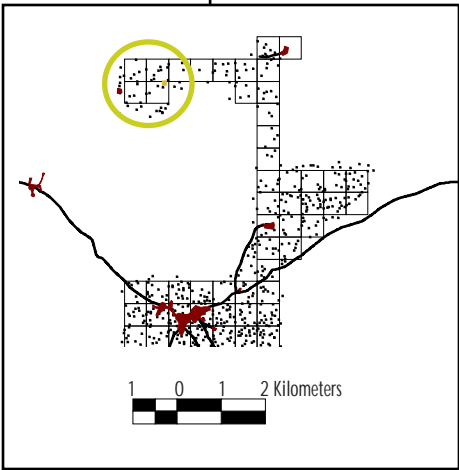
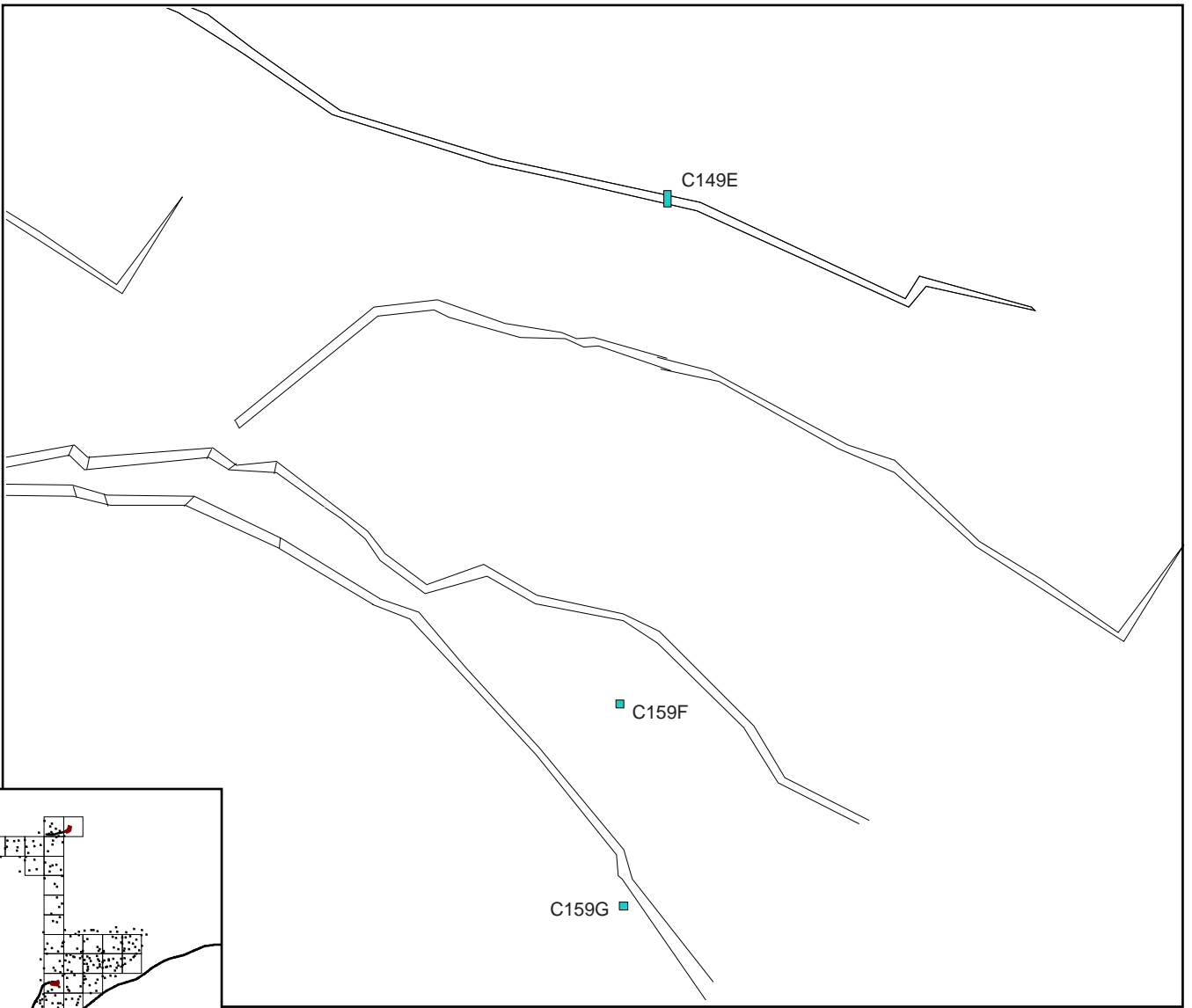


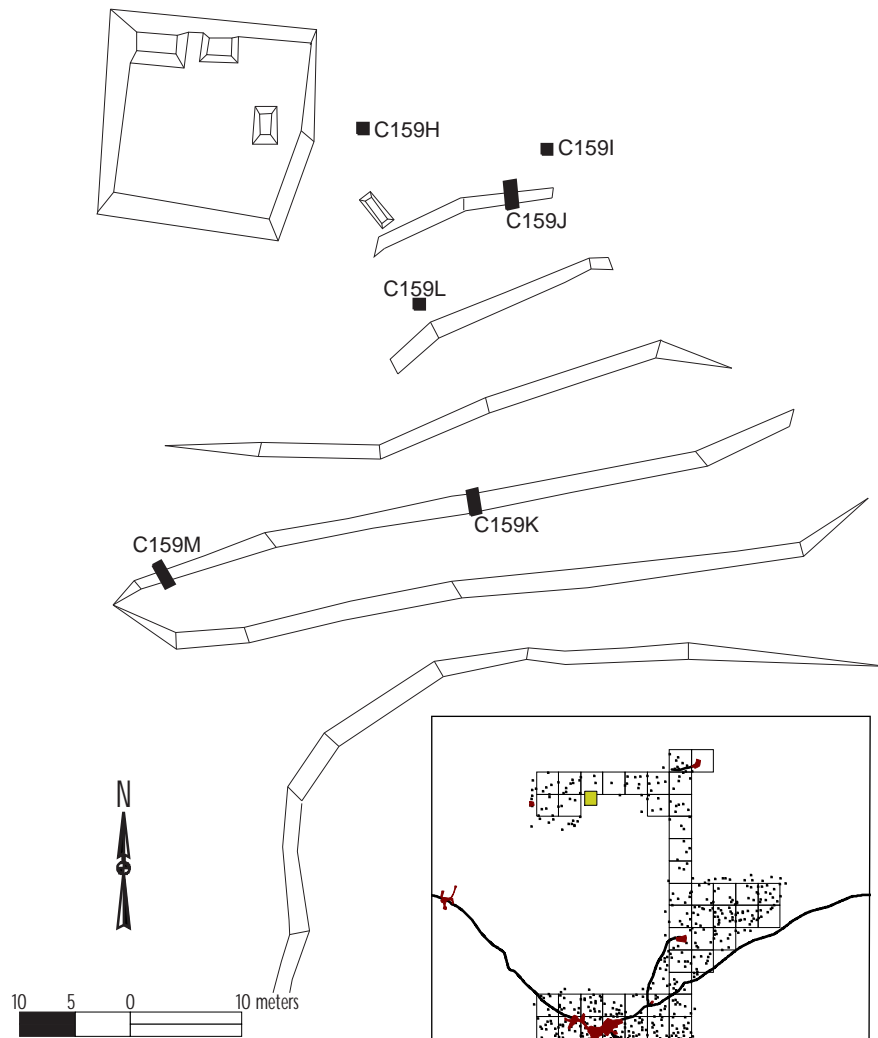
OPERATION C159F

north section

east section





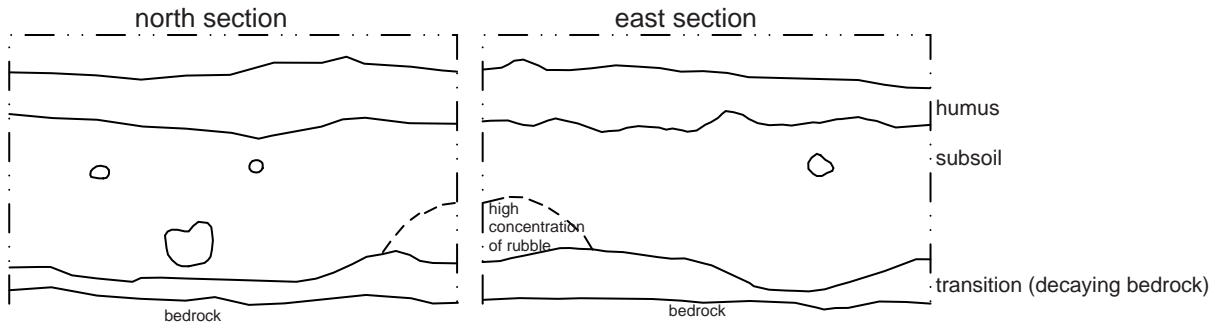


Map above shows the location of excavations. Each excavation is labeled. The map to the right shows the location of the excavations in relation to the whole surveyed area.

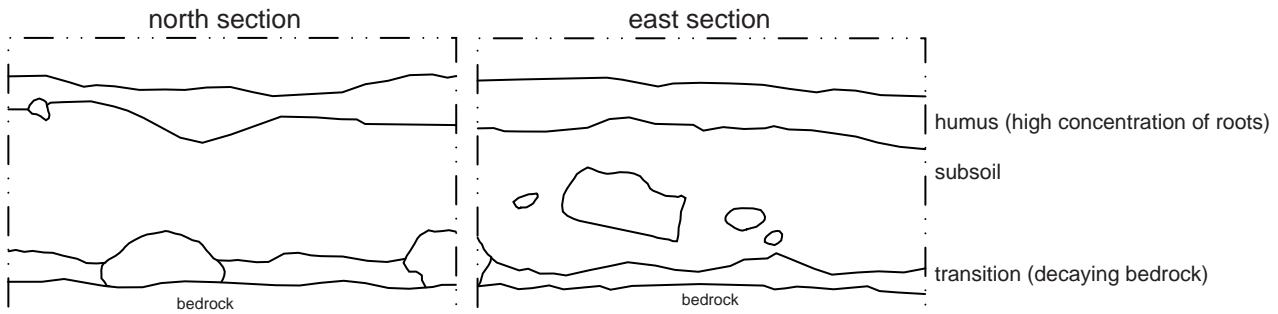
1 meter



OPERATION C159H

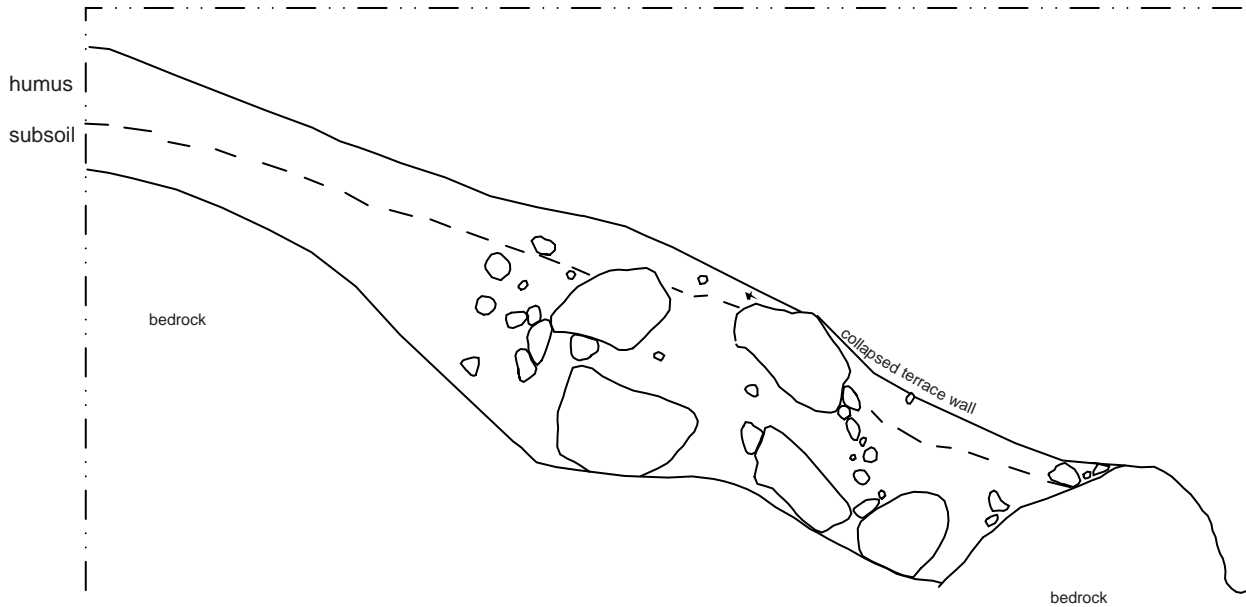


OPERATION C159I

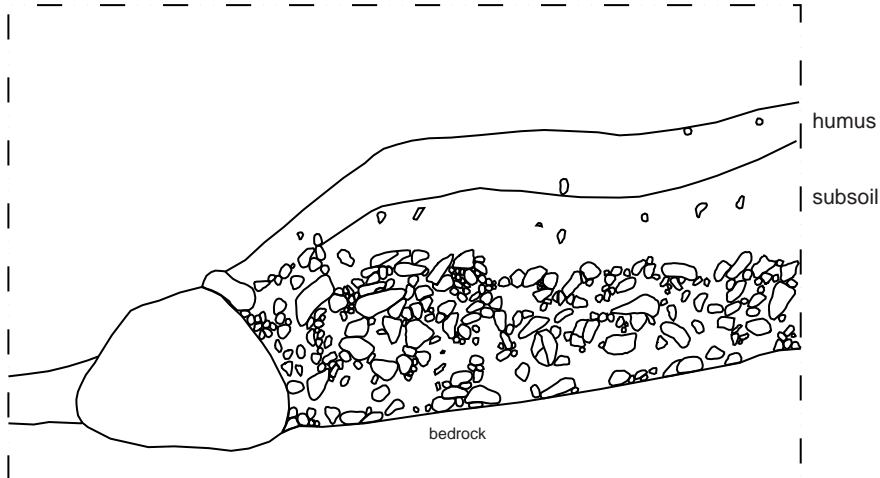


OPERATION C159J

east section



OPERATION C159K west section



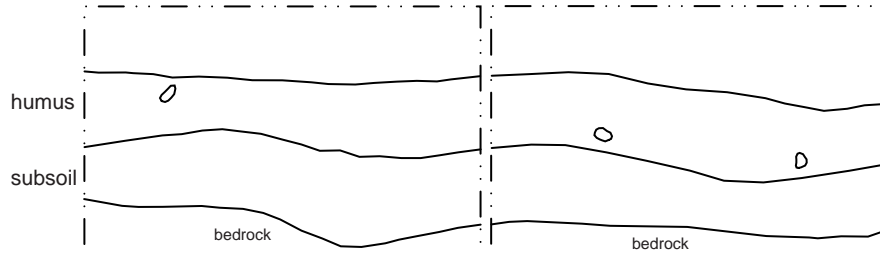
1 meter



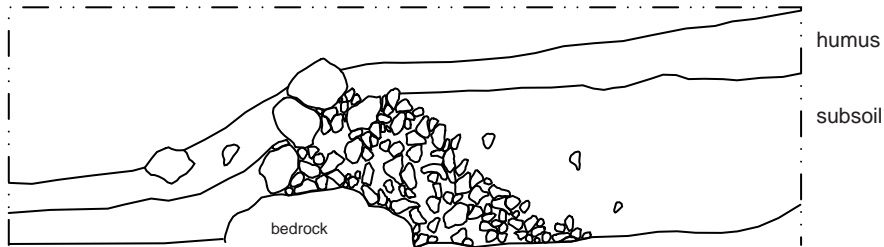
OPERATION C159L

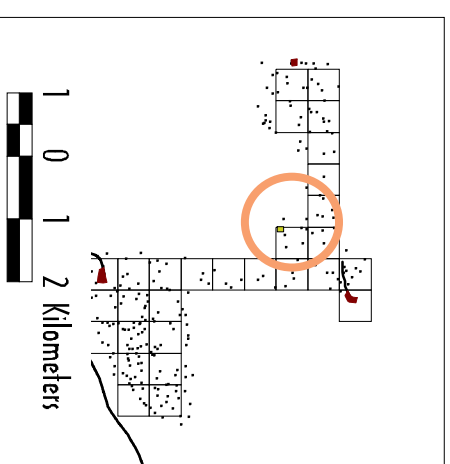
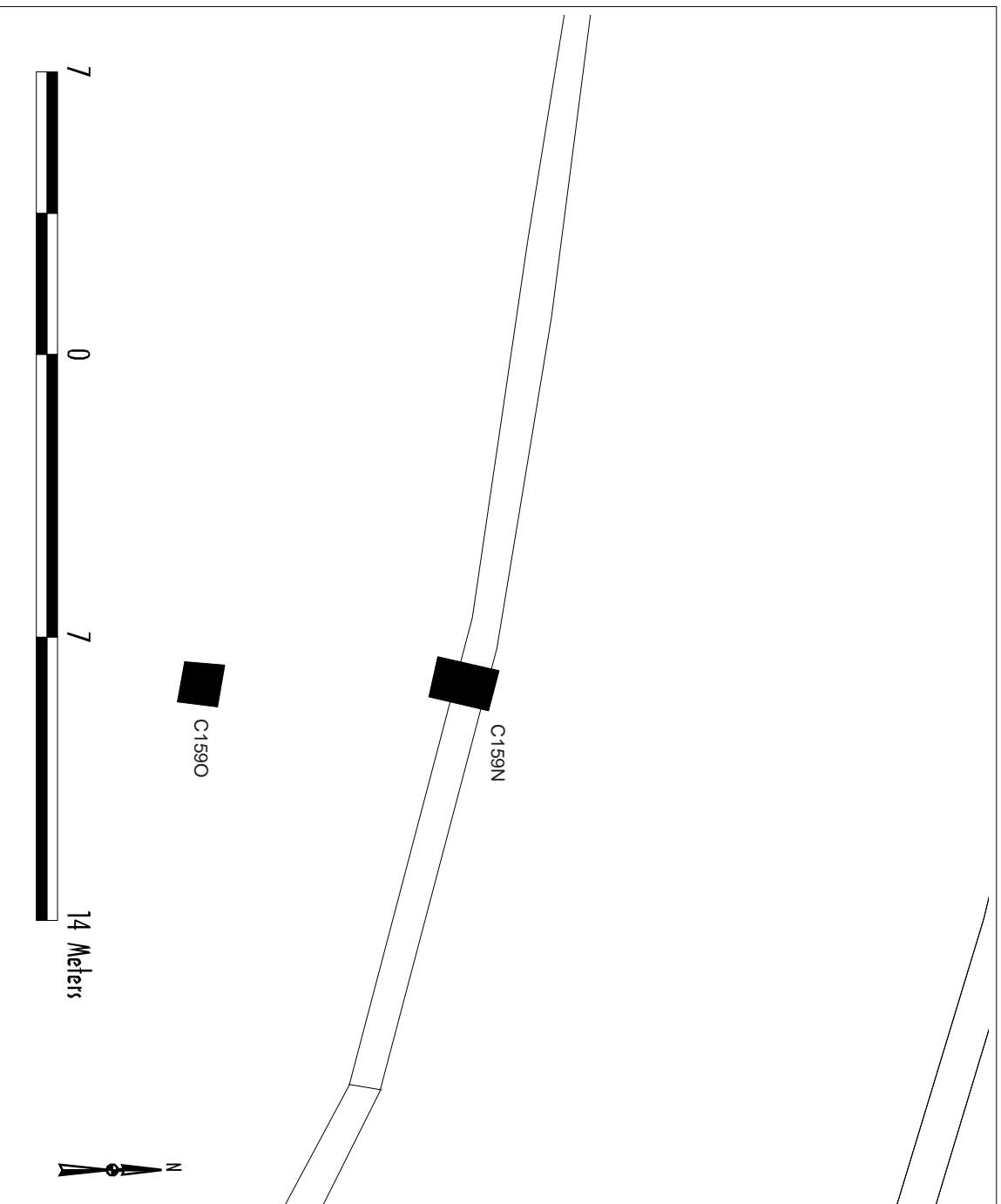
north section

east section

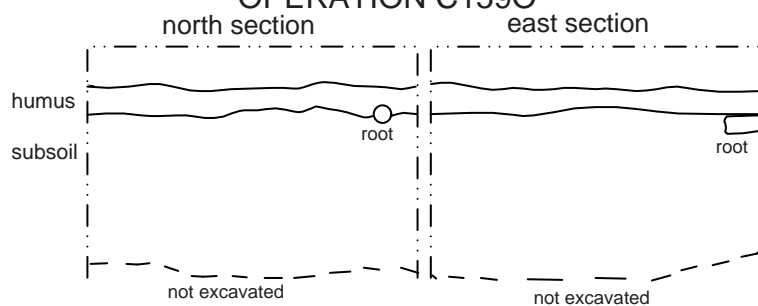


OPERATION C159M south section





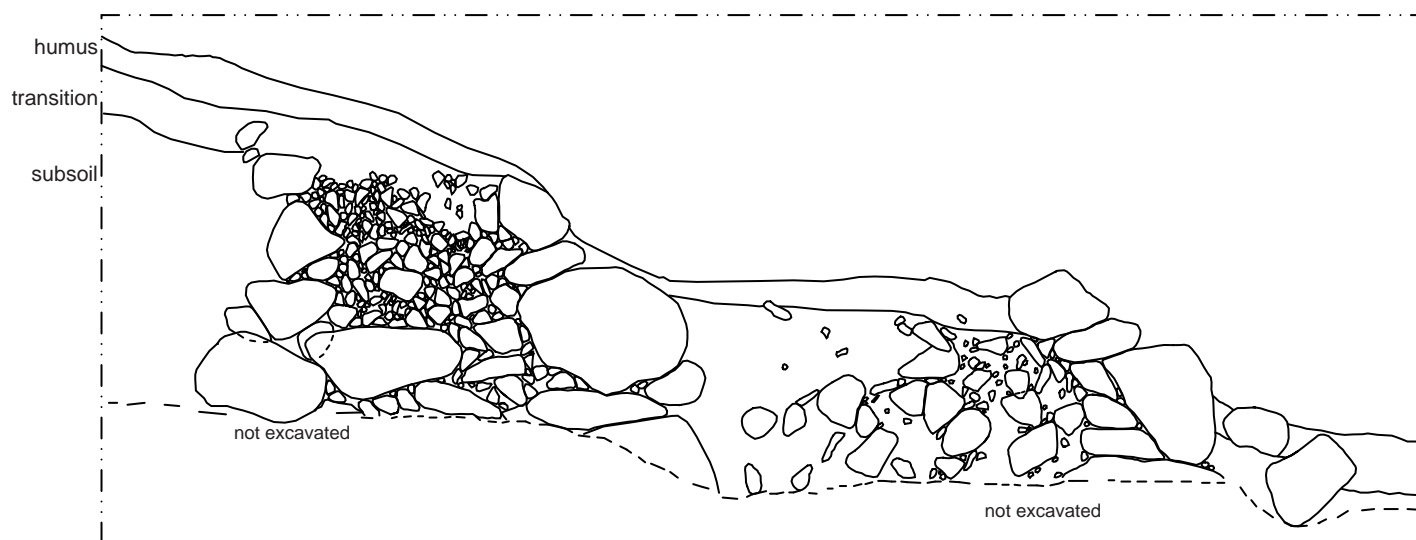
OPERATION C1590



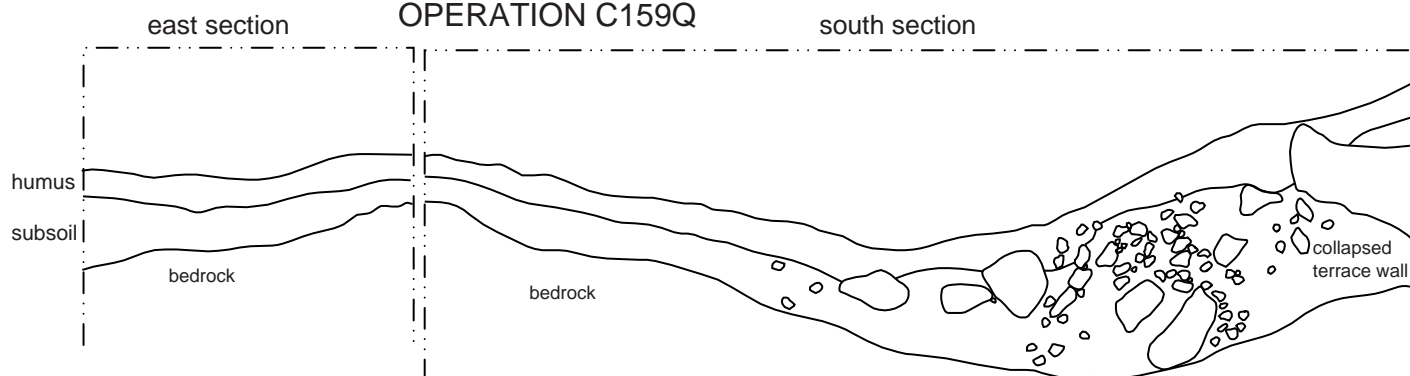
1 meter

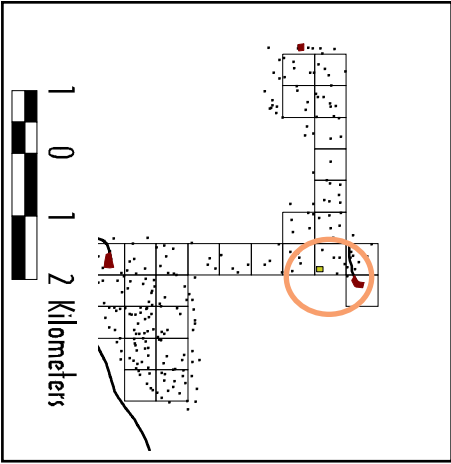
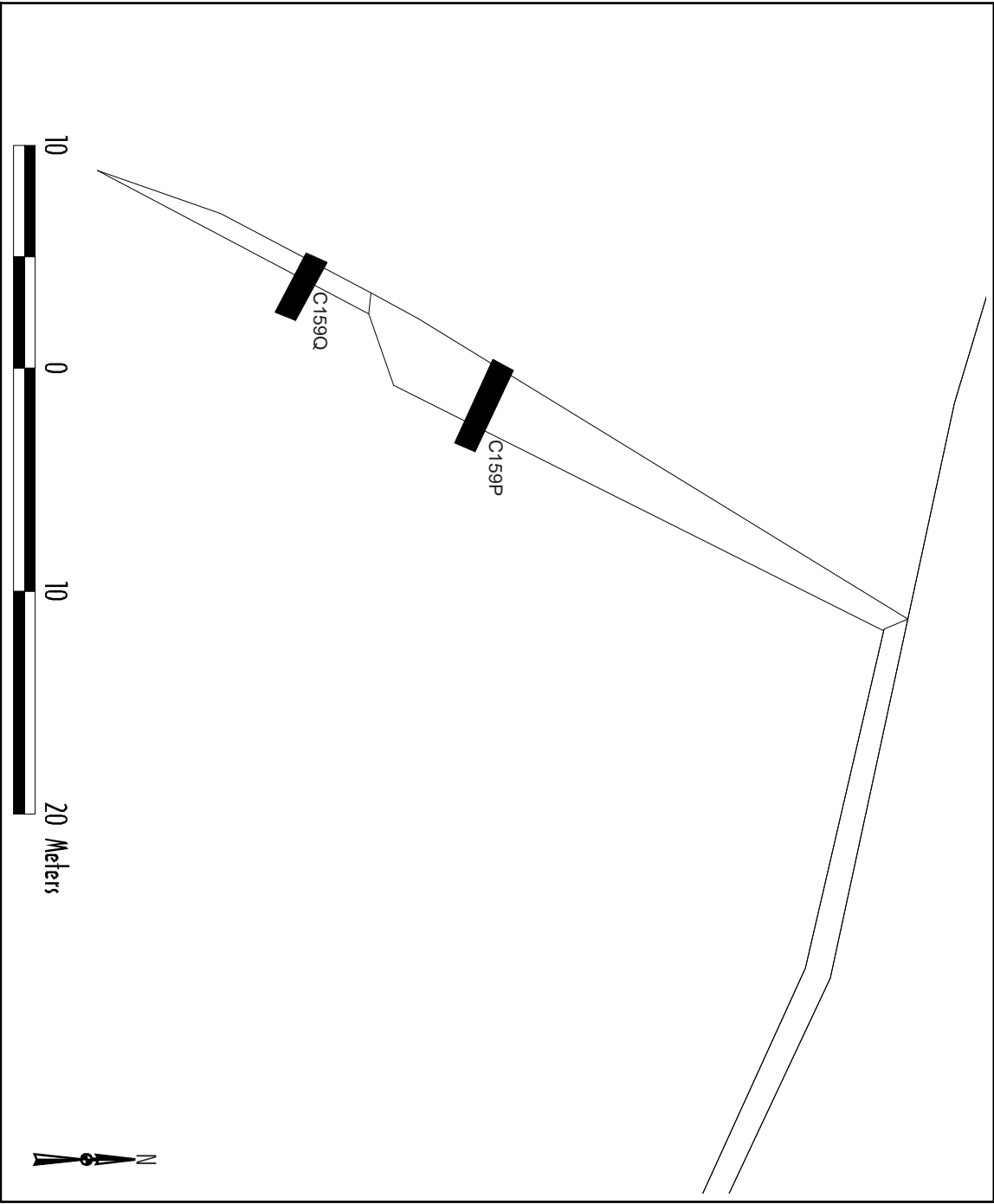


OPERATION C159P south section

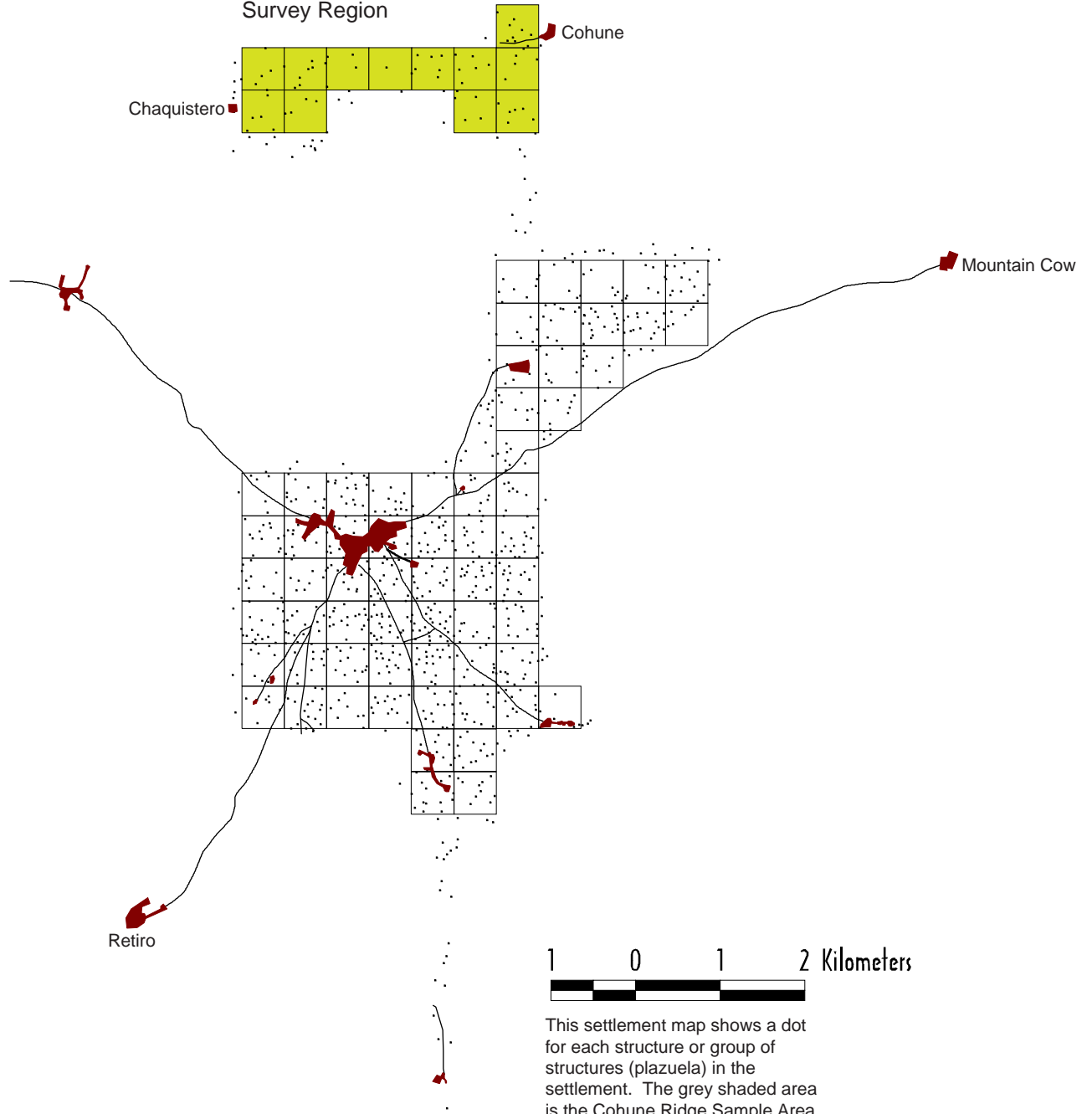


OPERATION C159Q



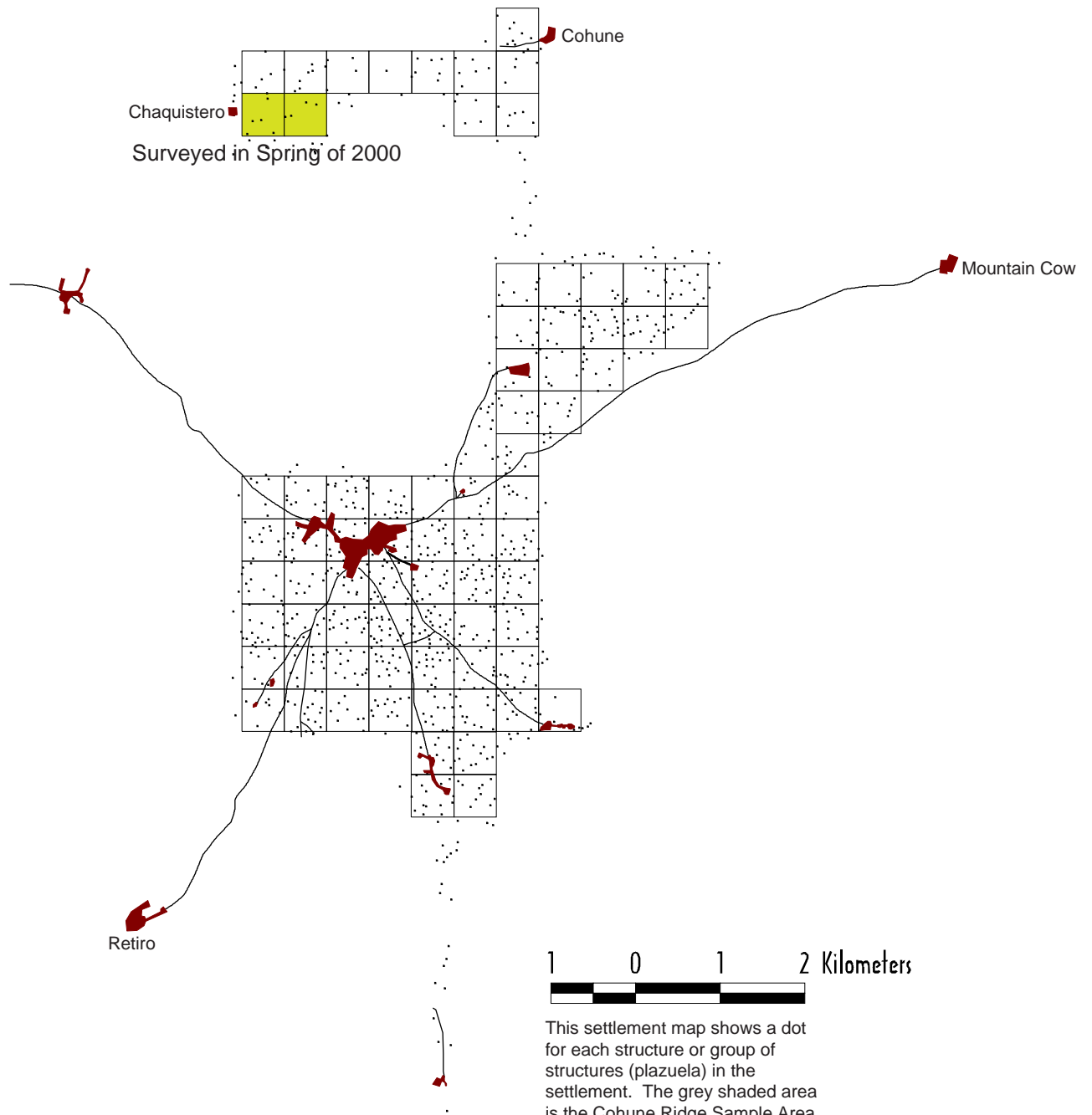


Cohune Ridge
Archaeological Settlement
Survey Region

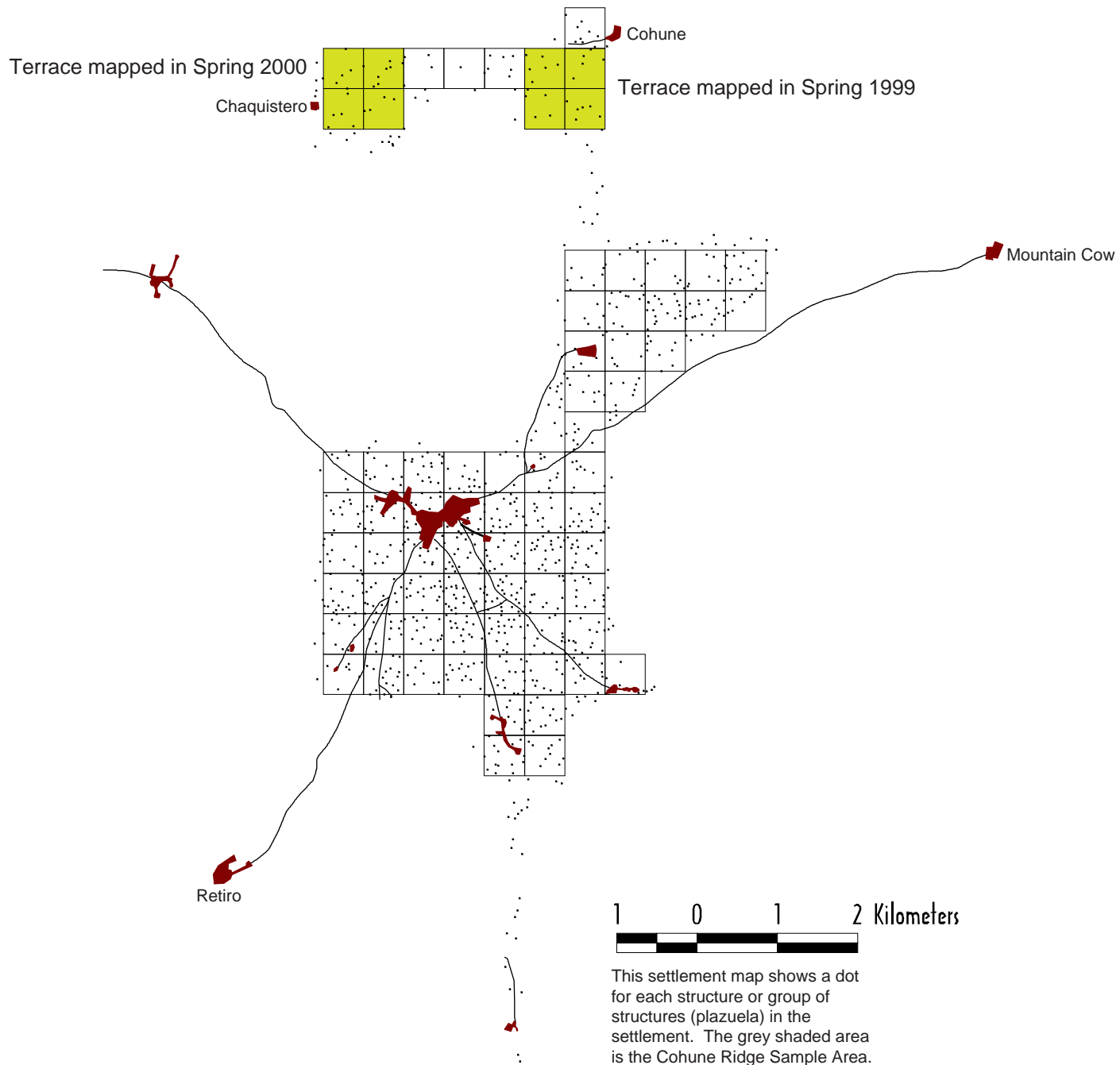


1 0 1 2 Kilometers

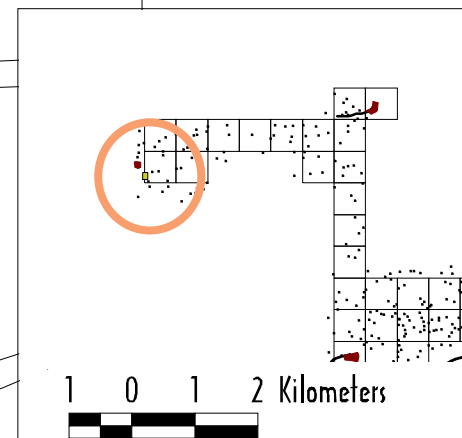
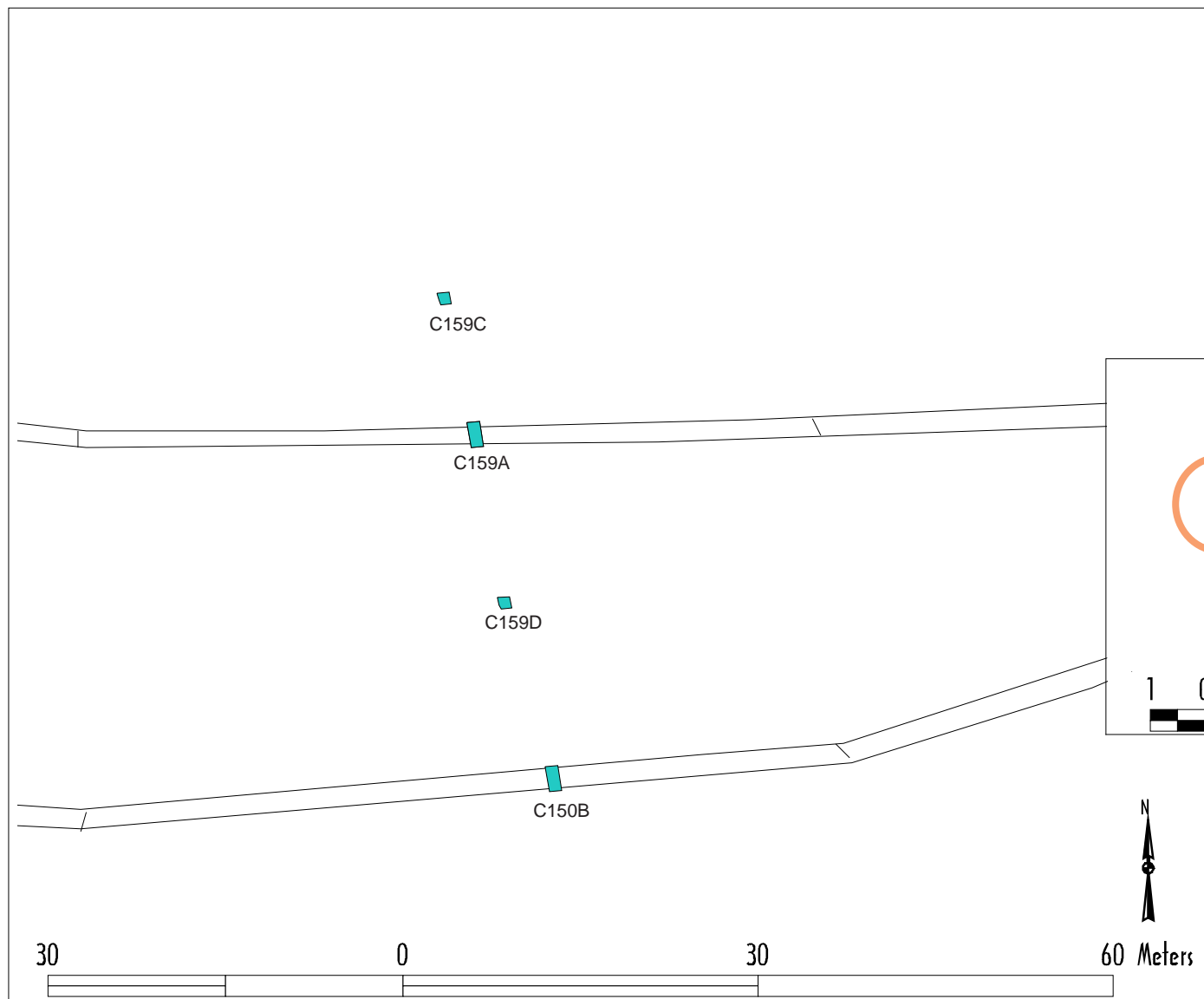
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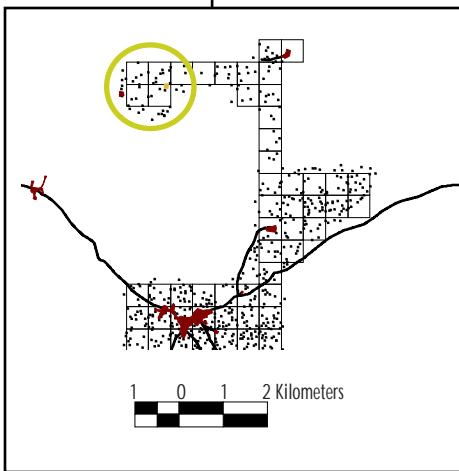


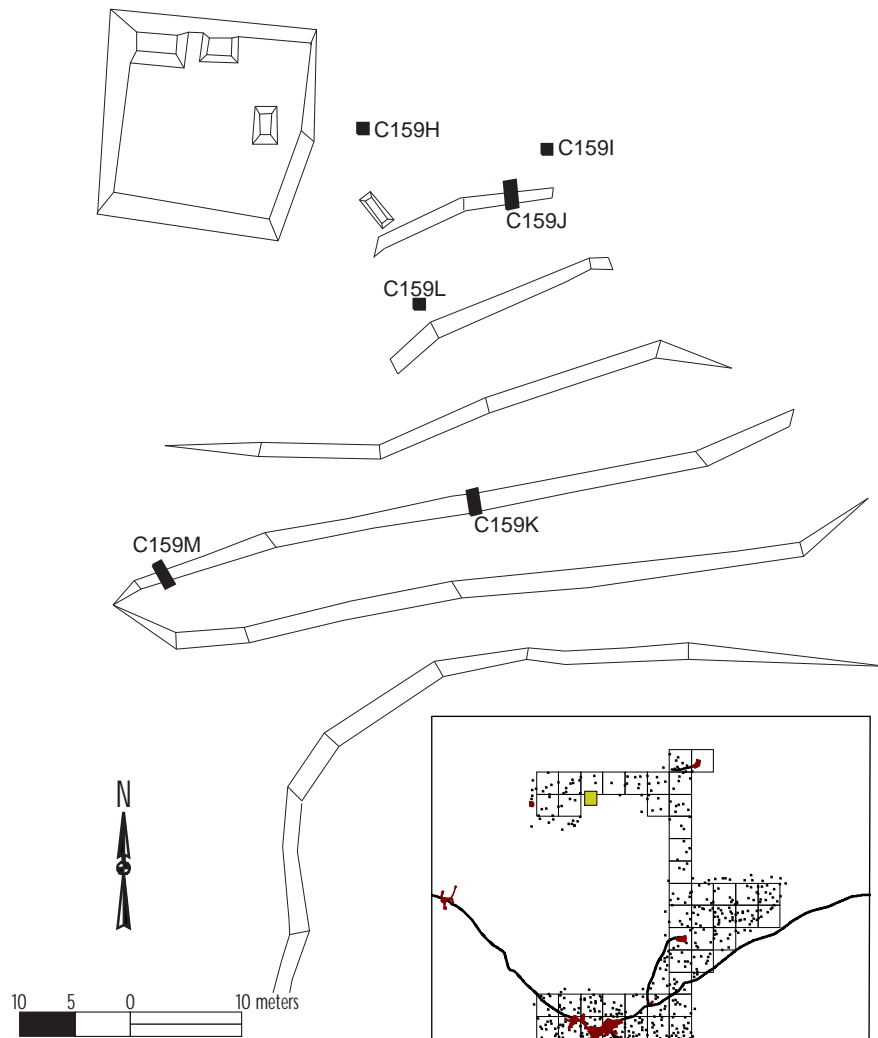
Surveyed in Spring of 2000



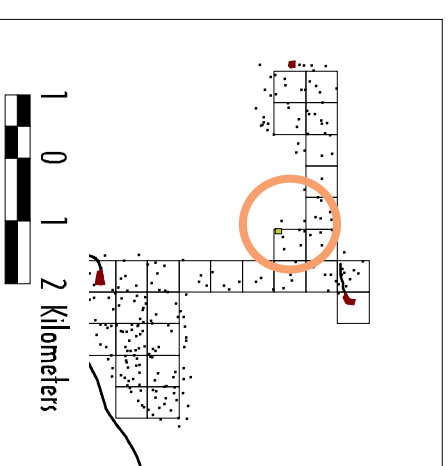
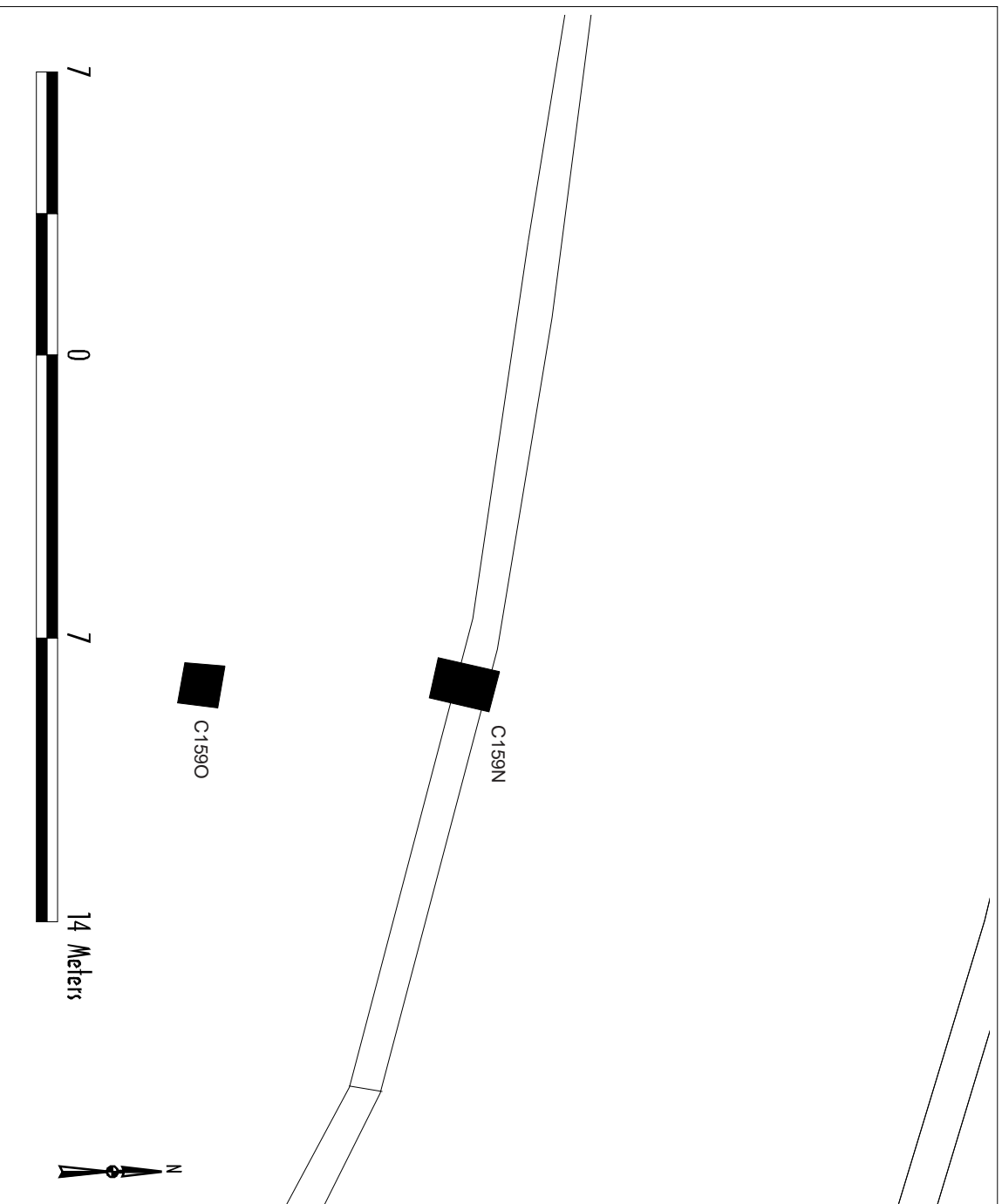
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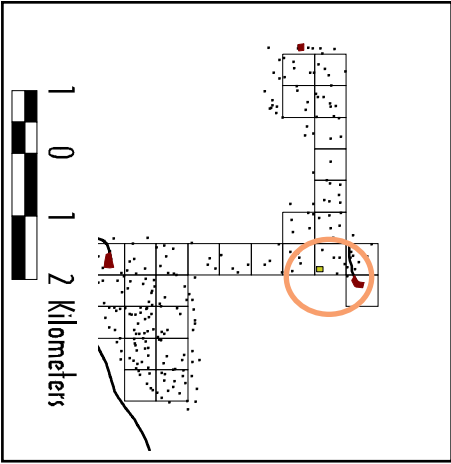
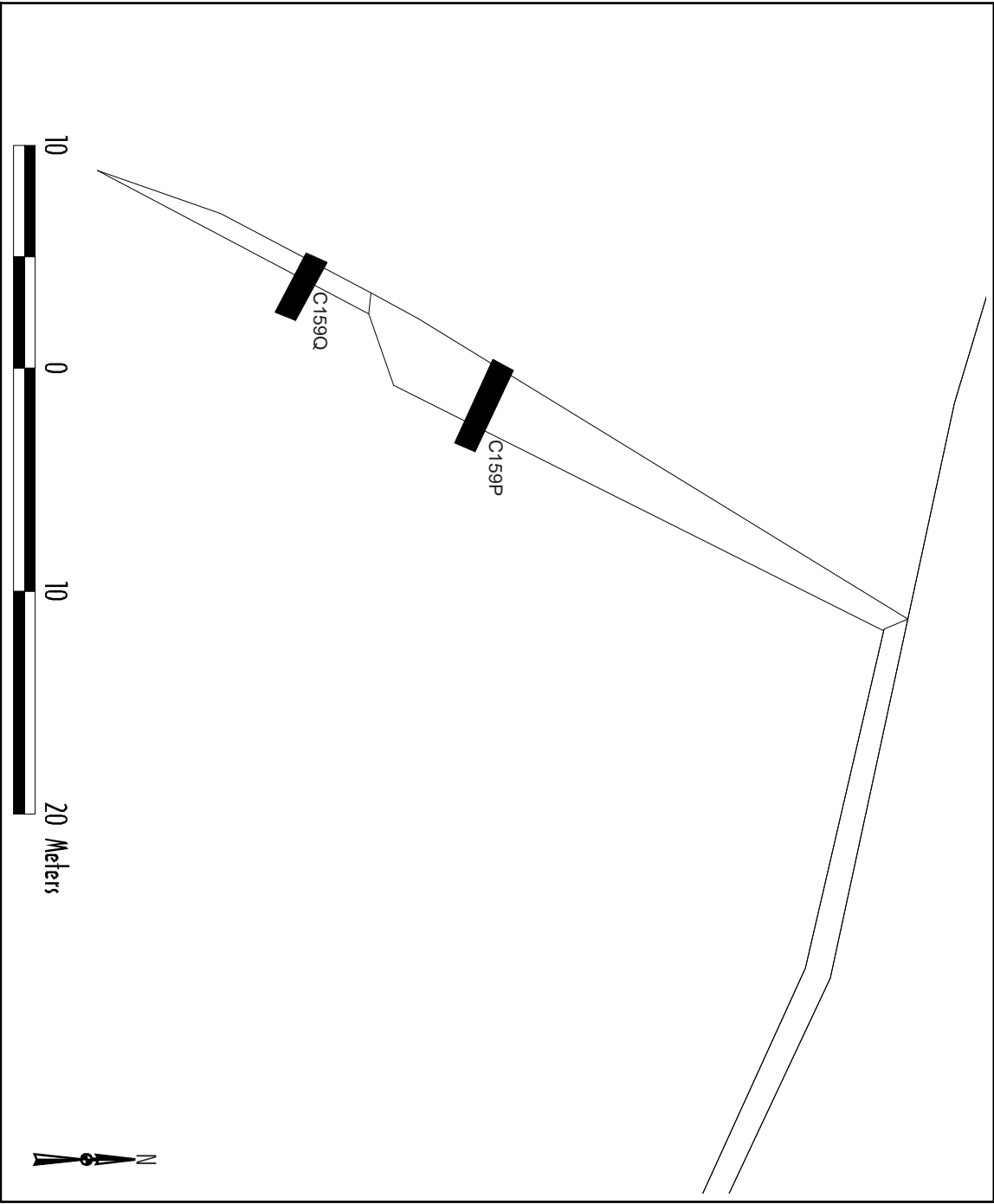




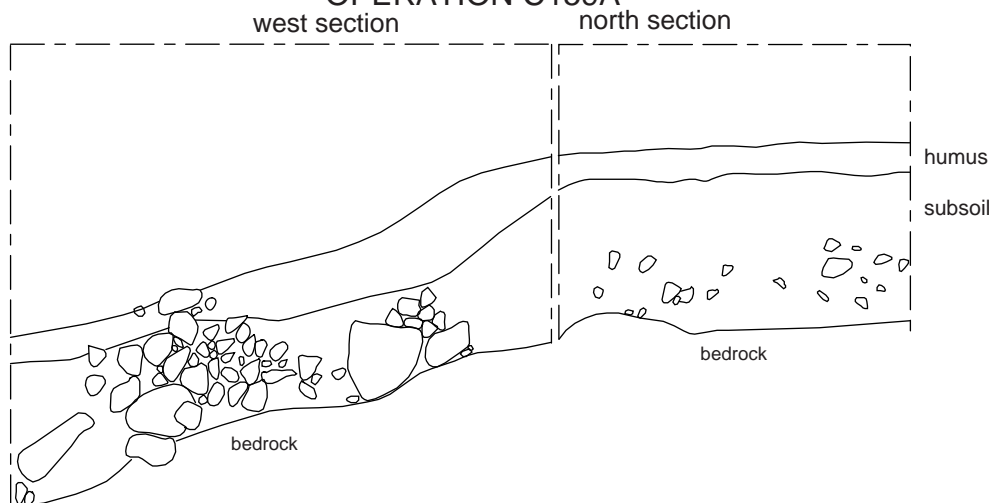


Map above shows the location of excavations. Each excavation is labeled. The map to the right shows the location of the excavations in relation to the whole surveyed area.

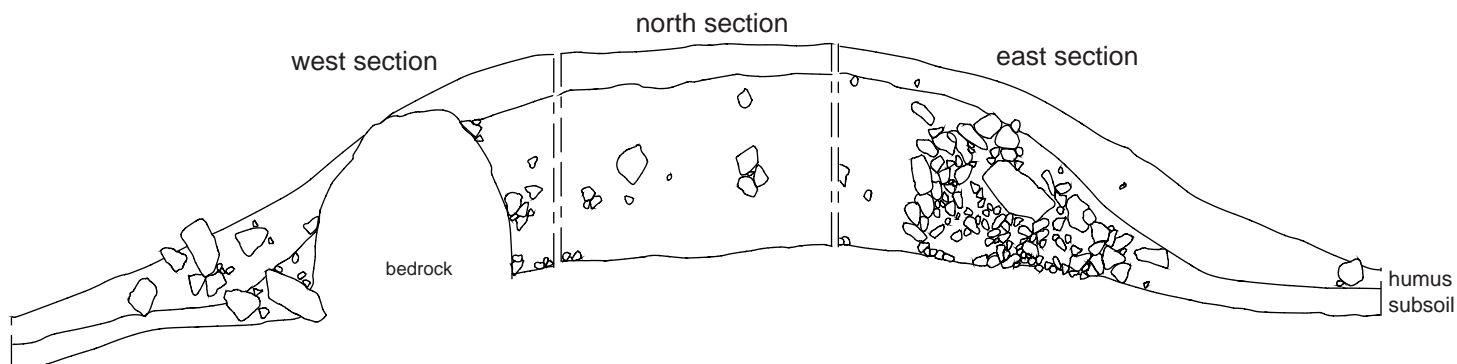




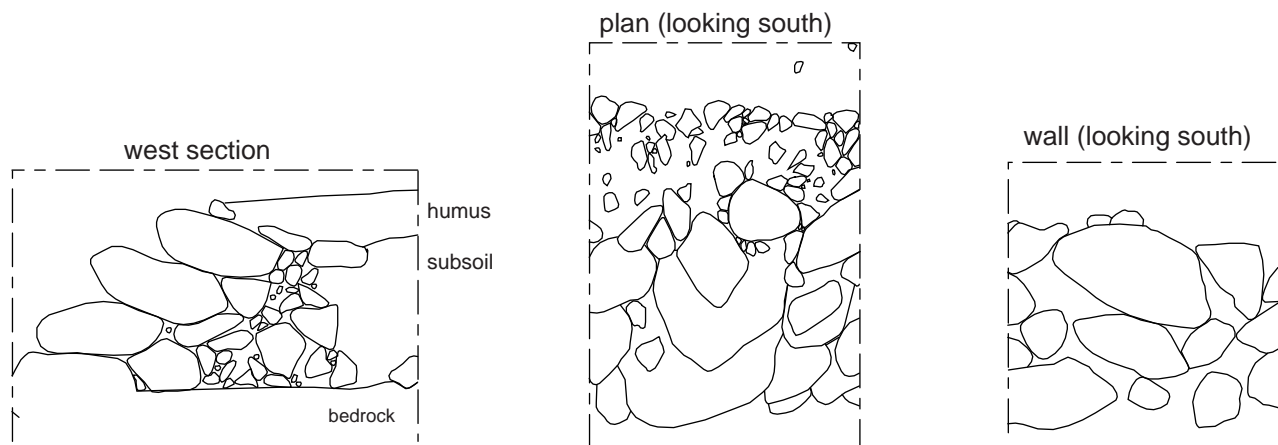
OPERATION C159A



OPERATION C159B



OPERATION C159N

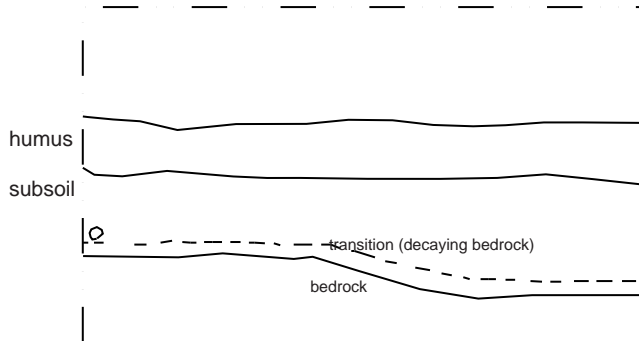


1 meter

1 meter

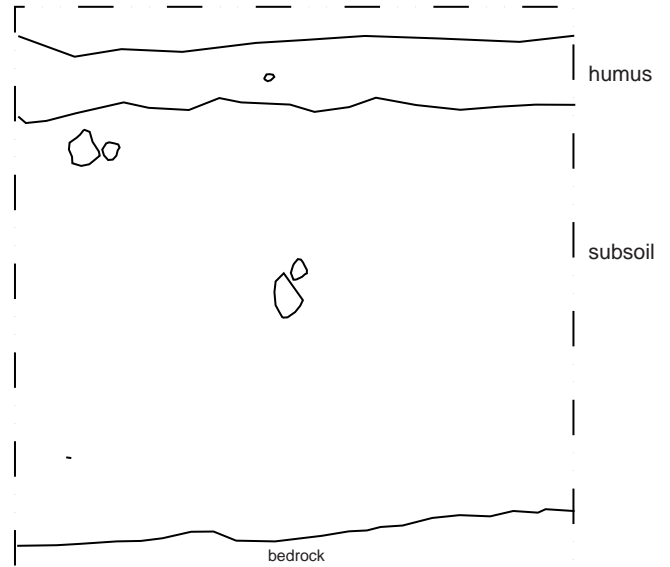
OPERATION C159C

north section



OPERATION C159D

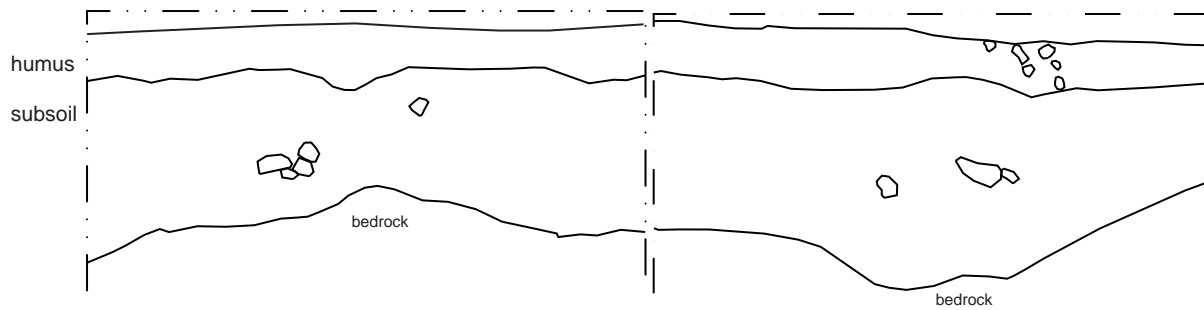
north section



OPERATION C159E

north section

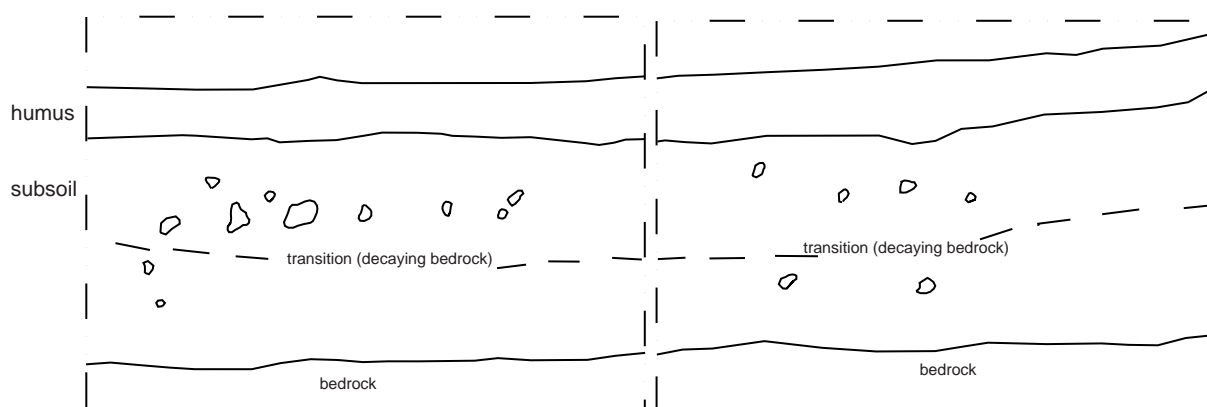
east section



OPERATION C159F

north section

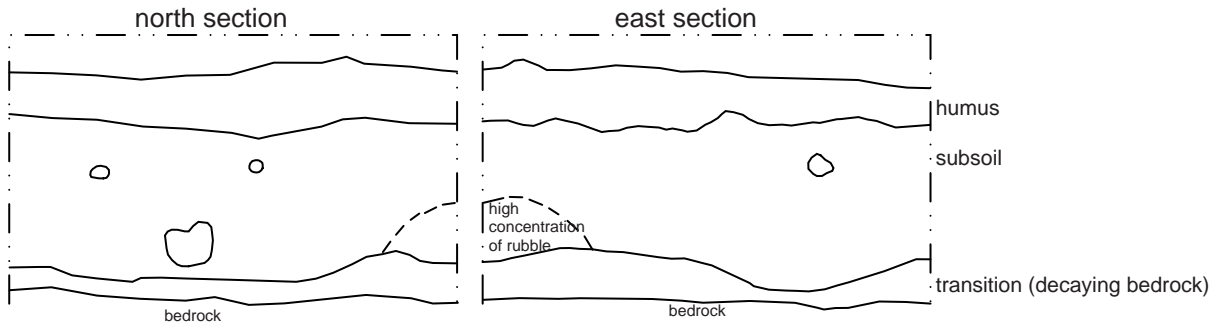
east section



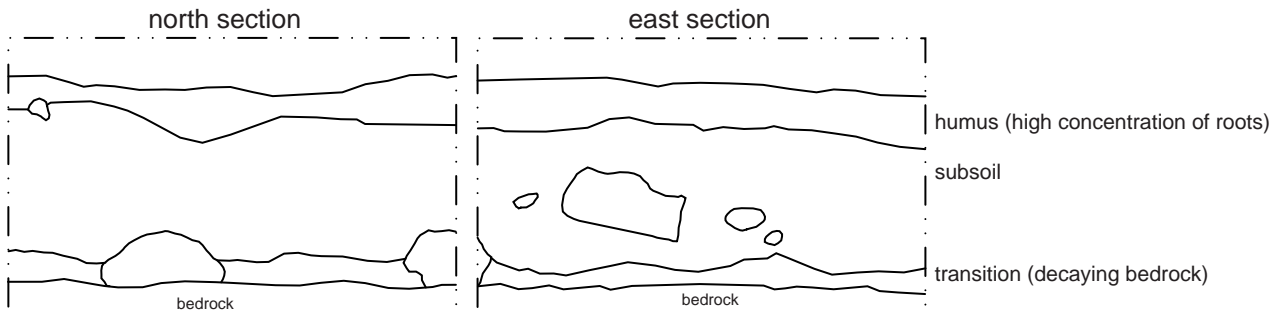
1 meter



OPERATION C159H

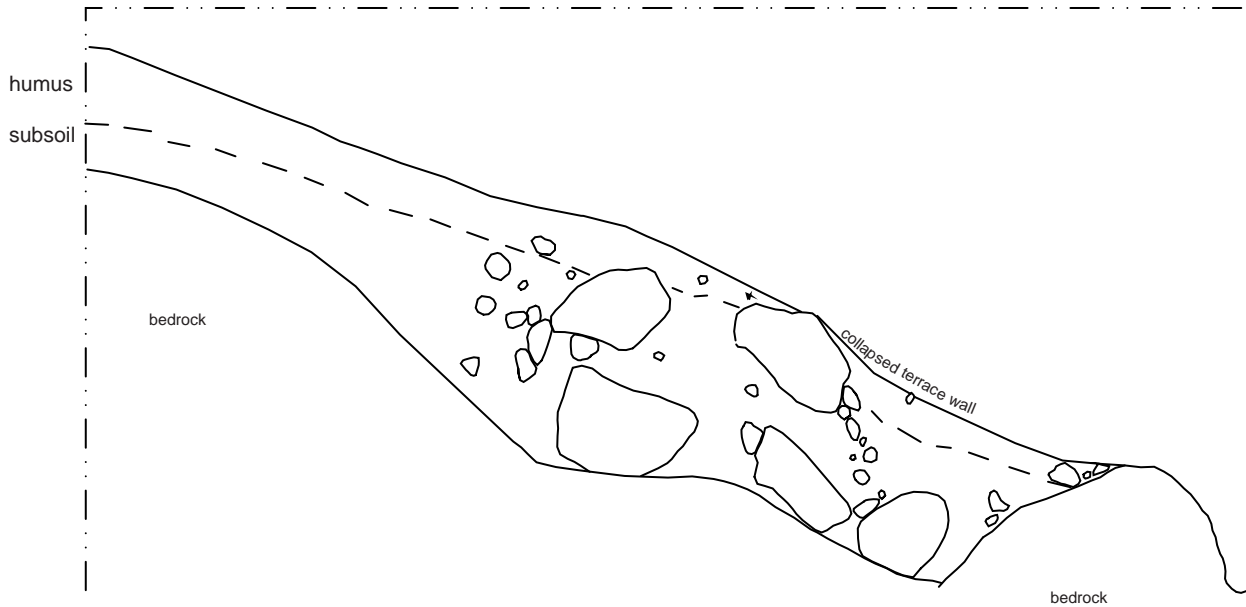


OPERATION C159I

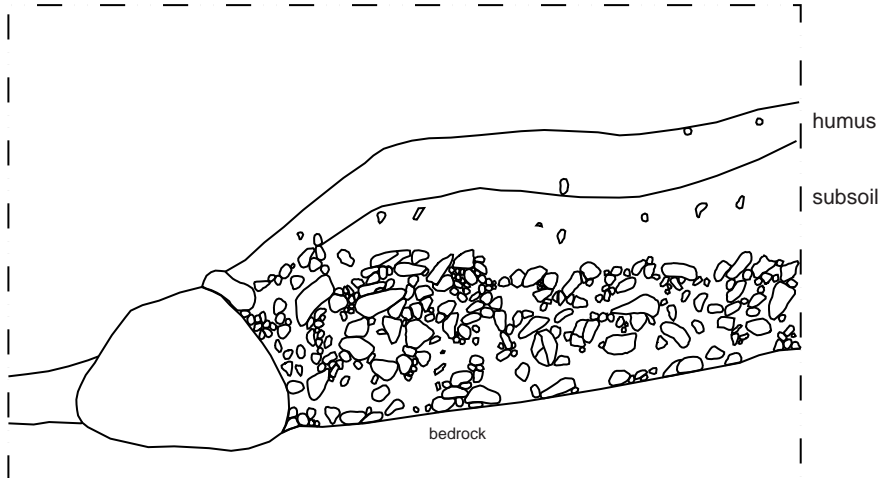


OPERATION C159J

east section



OPERATION C159K west section



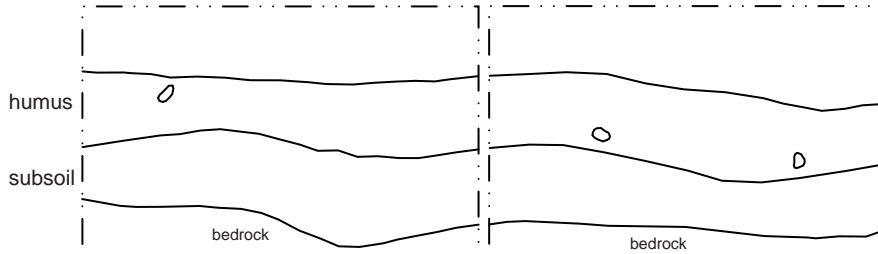
1 meter



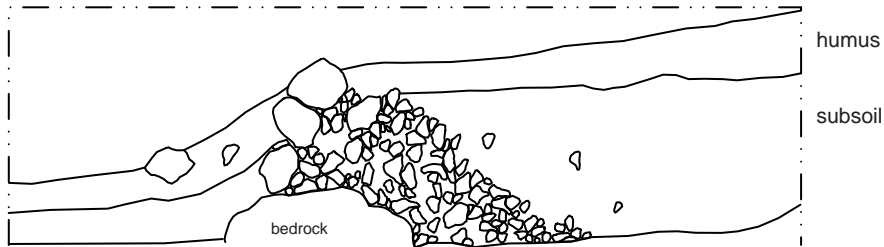
OPERATION C159L

north section

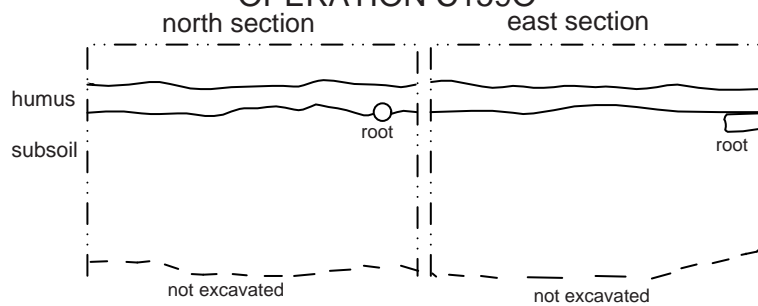
east section



OPERATION C159M south section



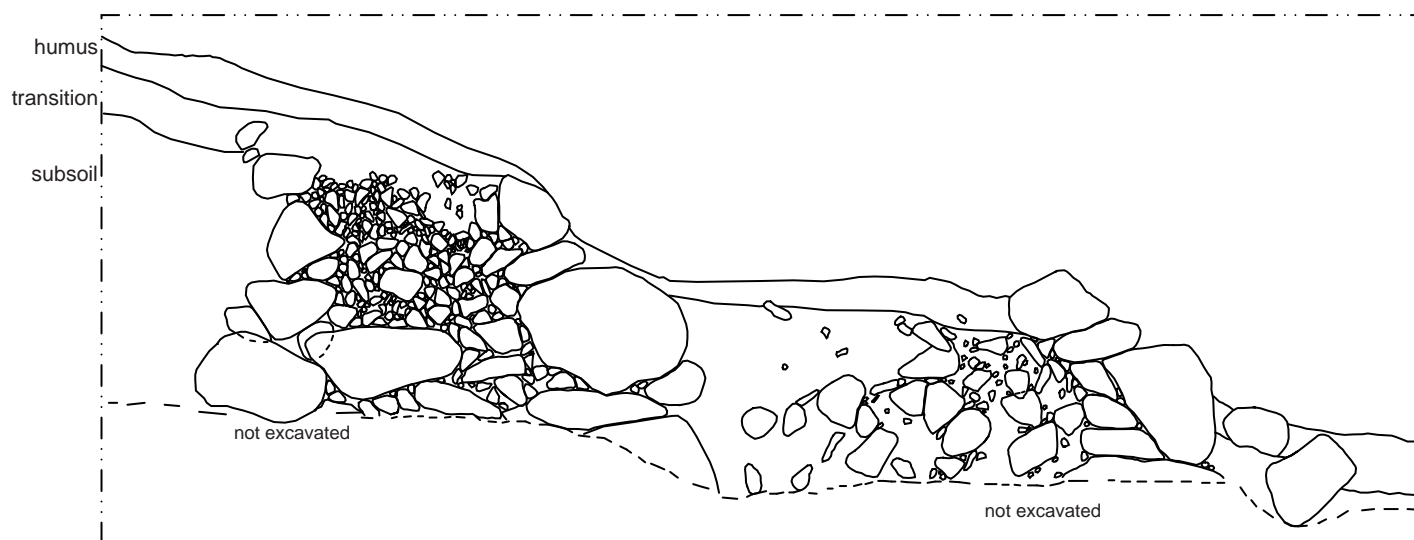
OPERATION C1590



1 meter



OPERATION C159P south section



OPERATION C159Q

