

Since caches and burials were recovered below shrines at Mayapán, the interior and fill below (Level 3A) Str. 607A were excavated. In the fill of the primary construction of the structure, a small piece of gold foil was found. It is likely that the foil was cached within a perishable container. Similar pieces of metal foil were encountered in the medial cache (Cache 4) of Str. 602 and in Str. 603.

A 0.9 x 0.9 m unit, Test Unit 501, 587, was excavated inside the boundary formed by the walls of the primary construction in order to examine the construction sequence below Str. 607A (Figure 7-39). The test unit encountered bedrock at 2.56 m b.d. Upon the bedrock rested a dark brown clay (Level 11) that was encountered in Test Unit 1 of the 1994 excavations in Group A and contained ceramics dating to the Middle Preclassic period (Rice et al 1996: 47). Since this material has been encountered in most test pits in Group A excavated to bedrock, it appears to have covered to top of the entire hill and may have been the first leveling of the area. Upon Level 11 was placed a fill layer of medium sized stones in a matrix of soil (Level 10). Upon this material, a wall was constructed, the inside edge of which was barely touched by the northern side of the unit, with Preclassic fill (Level 9). Above this was a ballast layer (Level 8B) capped by Floor 5 (Level 8). Floor 5 was covered by a thin Preclassic fill/ballast layer (Level 7), which was, in turn, capped by Floor 4 (Level 6). Floor 4 was topped by a Preclassic ballast (level 5) and Late Preclassic Floor 3 (Level 4). While containing Late Preclassic ceramics, Floors 5 to 3 were most likely plaza surfaces constructed in the Terminal Classic period because the final version occurred at the same level as a Terminal Classic floor inside Str. 602. Floor 3 was topped by a 30 cm-thick Postclassic fill (Level 3A) upon which the first version of Str. 607 was built. Floor 2 (not pictured) was the plaza

surface contemporaneous with the primary version of Str. 607 and Floor 1 (not pictured) with the latest construction.

#### Architectural Composition of Str. 607B

Str. 607B lies 1.25 m west of Str. 607A (Figure 7-41). It is a 1.84 m long (north/south), 87 cm wide (east/ west), and 25 cm tall stone rectangular structure made of squared vertical slabs. The similarity between the heights and east/ west dimensions of the two structures and the presence of an identical pair of buildings in Group B demonstrates that while Str. 607A and 607B are distinct bodies, they are complementary.

#### Previous Constructions of Str. 607B

The interior of Str. 607B was excavated in order to examine whether or not the stone rectangle held any contents. No in situ deposits of portable artifacts were encountered in the excavations, but an earlier and smaller stone rectangle was found inside. Its interior was excavated, but did not contain in situ deposits. Unlike the larger second construction of Str. 607B and Str. 607A, first construction of Str. 607B is centered directly upon the medial axis of Str. 602.

Following the excavation of the primary construction of Str. 607B, we excavated below Str. 607B in order to search for buried features. Cache 1 of Str. 607B was encountered just east of the primary construction. The cache contained a single miniature, plastered, and lidded vessel with two loop handles on the body and one on the lid. The form was similar to that of Cache 4 of Str. 602, but it was much smaller. No artifacts were found within the vessel.

### Artifact Distributions of Str. 607

Artifact distributions associated with the northern side of Str. 607A were partially disturbed by the looting of the western side of Str. 602 and the subsequent clean-up operation. Along the eastern end of Str. 607A, on the building and plaza surface, a concentration of image censer sherds was encountered. The majority of the sherds were part of a single Patojo Modeled var. Moza human effigy censer (Figure 7-17). Most of these sherds were found on or to the south of the building. This concentration did not erode out of Str. 602 as it tapers off as one moves closer to its lower western stairway. Several pieces of incense and carbon were found associated with the concentration, further suggesting that the area was the locus of a ritual event.

Two fragments of limestone sculpted in the round were found in the same area as the censer sherds and incense. The fragments were not sufficient to speculate about the form of the complete sculpture; however, there are two strong possibilities based upon the data from the excavations of the Carnegie Institution at Mayapán. First of all, as noted, Mayapán temple assemblages often have a small platform between the temple and raised shrine upon which were placed statues and Str. 607A is identical in form to these buildings. A second explanation is that they were fragments of sculpted serpent heads that lay at the base of the balustrade of the lower western stairway. Such sculptures were found on balustrades and columns at Mayapán (Proskouriakoff 1962: Figures 6 and 7).

During the excavation of Test Unit 1 of the 1994 excavations at Zacpetén, a flat limestone slab incised on one side was encountered at the base of Level 1 (Rice et al. 1996: Fig. 15), which was a Late Postclassic/ Contact Period deposit. While the plaster was eroded in this area, the stone probably lay on the plaza surface. It lay 1 m northwest

of the northwest corner of Str. 607A. It was 41 cm wide and incised with parallel lines broken by perpendicular lines forming a series of adjacent rectangles. Some of the rectangles were filled with an "X." Similar objects recovered in plazas of other sites are thought to be patolli boards (Smith 1977: 349; Graham 1985: 217). Its position in front of the stairway of Str. 602 establishes a vague parallel between that building and Str. A-3 of Seibal, where a patolli board incised into a stone slab was encountered in the position of an altar in front of Stela 10, which was set in front of the north stairway (Smith 1977: 356-357). The Seibal monument was set during *k'atun* rites and mentions the name Kan Ek' and Mutul, which could be Tikal, Mutul de San Jose, or Ixlú (Schele and Mathews 1998: 186). The board was not only found along the medial axis extending from Str. 602, but also where this axis intersected with that between the stairways of the southern shrine, Str. 601, and the open hall, Str. 606. This position is interesting given the cruciform layout of most boards.

To the south of the western end of Str. 607, a light concentration of human remains (Figure 7-40) including small cranial fragments and teeth lay on the building and fragmented plaza floor. It was originally thought that the remains had leached out of a burial disturbed by roots or animal burrowing, but excavations into the plaza fill below the fragments revealed that they were stratigraphically associated with the latest plaster surface. To the west of Str. 607B in 500, 577, a concentration of miscellaneous bone, some of which could be human, was encountered. It is possible that ritual activities conducted to the south of Str. 607B were connected to the deposits of disarticulated human bone found in Operations 1000 and 1001 and to the north of Str. 615. Between

Str. 607A and 607 B was a light concentration of La Justa/ Extranjeras non-image censer sherds, which may have played a part in such rituals.

To the south of Str. 607 were various artifacts not found to the north, such as crystals and beads (Figure 7-41). This is a pattern observed in Str. 766 and may have been typical of most artifacts in Str. 607 before disturbance caused by the looting of Str. 602. The presence of such artifacts on the south and none on the north may indicate the sweeping of objects off the buildings surface or deposition to its rear.

In addition to recording distributions of materials on top of the latest Late Postclassic plaza surface (Floor 1), patterns were also found in the fill (Level 3B) between Floor 1 and Floor 2. Hence, activities associated with the primary construction of Str. 607 are also discernible. In fact, since the looting and subsequent salvage operations on Str. 602 did not affect the deeper materials, they may be more telling than the later artifacts to the north of Str. 607, which were disturbed. In the earlier deposit, many artifact types, including chert bifaces and blades, hammer stones, miscellaneous shell, and Patojo var. Patojo sherds (Figure 7-42) were concentrated to the south of Str. 607. Also concentrated on the southern side of the building were human remains (Figure 7-43) including teeth and a child's mandible matching the remains found in the later version of Str. 607. Between Str. 607A and B in 500, 581 was a concentration of miscellaneous bone, miscellaneous ceramics, and chert cores and debitage, which may have been a secondary refuse deposit. Spread across the building were several stone/shell beads and a quartz crystal.

Str. 607 is a long, low building that appears very similar to the statue shrines of Mayapán. Like most buildings in Group A, it was constructed and later reconstructed.

Str. 607 was located just south of the medial axis extending from Str. 602 and may have been a station along the central ceremonial path. Artifacts tended to be located on the southern side of the building in both the earlier and later version of the building. The deposition of the artifacts on the southern side suggests either sweeping or deposition behind the structure. The building was the location of mortuary or sacrificial activities, crystallomancy, and limited use of image censers.

#### Str. 614

Str. 614 is located adjacent to the southwest corner of Str. 606 on the southern edge of the large borrow pit/ mass grave (Op. 1000) in the northeast corner of Group A (Figure 7-1). It is a poorly preserved C-shaped building facing south, 174° east of north (Figure 7-44 and 7-45). The front of the building does not rest on a platform; however, the north bench is elevated 55 cm above the lip of the borrow pit. A 117 m<sup>2</sup> area covering 100% of Str. 614 was excavated. There was no substantial collapse on top of the architecture, reflecting the small size of the construction and the lack of exterior walls. No test unit was excavated through the fill of Str. 614. The vertical datum of Str. 614 was located 3.9 m below that of Str. 602.

#### Architectural Composition of Str. 614

As mentioned, Str. 614 is poorly preserved, but its construction is also unimposing. Retaining walls support the sides of the bench, in some places, but no masonry walls enclosed the structure. If it were enclosed, the walls must have been perishable. All that remains of the structure are its bench and medial niche. Most of the

stones of the bench face were robbed for later constructions or perhaps for fill in the depression to the north (See Op. 1000, Level 3).

Along the northern body of the bench is a medial niche. The niche is 2.2 m long, cross-cutting the entire width of the bench, and at least 40 cm wide. No artifacts were found associated with the niche; however, its orientation toward the large borrow pit/mass grave (Op. 1000) to the north suggests that it may have been associated with that feature. In fact, the proximity of Str. 614 to the depression suggests some sort of association between the two. The niche may have provided a means of accessing the feature or perhaps making offerings into it.

The final architectural feature of note is a possible column base in Unit 518, 554. This column could have been western component of a pair of columns; however, an eastern counterpart was not encountered.

The excavations did not reveal a plaster surface at the base of the collapse of Str. 614. Either the structure never had a plaster surface or it had completely eroded. The existing surface is a ballast of small stones in gray soil. An east to west declination in the floor further attests to the poor construction of the structure (Figure 7-45). The base of the eastern bench rests 65 cm higher than the base of the western bench.

#### Artifact Distributions of Str. 614

The floor and benches of Str. 614 did not yield a great variety of in situ artifacts. A complete bark beater was found in Unit 518, 551 adjacent to the eastern arm of the bench; however, it may have been strewn fill. Cranial fragments (Figure 7-46) were found in 520, 558, but this deposit appears to have been part of a larger distribution of human bone extending from the southern part of 606C. A few censer sherds (primarily

La Justa Composite and Patojo Modeled) were encountered in the excavation, but there were no in situ concentrations. There were quite a few chert and obsidian small corner notched points (n=11) distributed across the surface of Str. 614. Two small greenstone/serpentine axes were also encountered within the structure. To the east of the building was an odd yellow crystal of the same unknown type as those encountered outside the north wall of Str. 605.

Str. 614 was a poorly constructed and preserved oratorio with a C-shaped wall and bench and no platform. Str. 614 is obviously associated with the large borrow pit/mass grave to its north which likely influenced its directionality and hints at a sacrificial theme. It was likely involved in the mediation of contact with the feature to its north. The lack of a variety of artifacts, poor preservation, and construction of the structure suggest it was used for a limited time, perhaps for a single ritual event (see Op. 1000).

#### Str. 615

Str. 615 is located in the southwestern portion of the plaza of Group A (Figure 7-1, 7-47, and 7-48) and is the only substantial ceremonial structure resting to the west of Str. 603. It is a C-shaped colonnaded hall facing 84.9° east of north. Unlike the other two open halls at Zacpetén, Str. 615 is not part of a Mayapán-style temple assemblage and did not seem to have a raised shrine facing into it. The structure does not rest upon a substantial platform, but its interior floor is raised 10 cm above the surface of the plaza to its east and 55 cm higher than the area to its west, which lay off the central plaza. A 337 m<sup>2</sup> excavation block was utilized to investigate 100% of the surface of Str. 615 and areas outside of the structure. The datum of Str. 615 lay 4.17 m below that of Str. 602.

### Architectural Composition of Str. 615

Str. 615 has a C-shaped exterior wall and bench, both of which are broken by a medial niche. Most of the exterior walls that lined the edges of the benches collapsed, but some of the lower portions of the walls remain. The medial niche of the western body of the bench is 2.44 m long and 83 cm wide and faces  $84.9^\circ$  east of north. Like the medial niche of Str. 605, it is uncertain whether it opened to the exterior of the structure or if it was sealed by a wall. The interior of the niche is not surfaced with plaster and sloped slightly from east to west. As mentioned in the earlier discussion of Str. 605, medial niches are related to medial altars, as both were the central focus of ceremonial activities.

The builders of Str. 615 do not appear to have been overly concerned with the uniformity in the orientation of the four exterior edges. The western edge faces  $264.9^\circ$  east of north, the eastern edge  $85.6^\circ$ , the northern edge  $0.7^\circ$ , and the southern edge  $88.3^\circ$ . The irregular orientation of the walls was transferred to the benches that they bordered. Even the central feature, the medial niche, was not perfectly aligned with the medial axis of the bench, but was 54 cm off-center. While Str. 615 has a superficial symmetry appreciable by those occupying its space, this balance does not appear to have been achieved through precise survey.

The thin plaster surface that covered the floor was almost completely eroded, but portions preserved adjacent to the north bench lay 0.13 m above the plaza surface next to the eastern edge of the structure. An earlier, primary plaster floor is located at the base surface of the bench wall, just a few centimeters above the plaza level; therefore, Str. 615, like most other buildings in Group A, had one major renovation.

The lintel that lay above the 13.65 m opening between the northern and southern return walls was supported by four perishable columns, which were evenly spaced with an interval of 3.4 m. Excavations revealed the stone foundations of these columns along the eastern edge of the structure. The column bases are approximately 50 by 60 cm in size and composed of a large limestone block surrounding by several smaller stones that were set into the floor.

Two masonry rectangles lie in the northern half of the interior of Str. 615 (Figure 7-48). Fea. 615-1 is 1.23 by 0.83 m and stands 20 cm higher than the second floor. It is composed of a single course of squared vertical slabs that enclosed a soil core. The stones were embedded into both the secondary and primary floor constructions and their bases rest 5 cm below the latter; therefore, the feature was part of the initial construction of the building. Fea. 615-2 is a similar stone rectangle south of Fea. 615-1. This feature is 1.24 by 0.8 m and stands 5 cm higher than the secondary floor. It is comprised of medium-sized stones with a soil core. The base of the stones is embedded 10 cm below the secondary surface and rests on top of the primary floor construction; hence, Fea. 615-2 was built after the first construction and before the construction of the second surface. One of these features was constructed each time a new floor was constructed in Str. 615. The interior and exterior of Fea. 615-1 and 2 were excavated and neither effort encountered special deposits of artifacts.

In the southern half of the structure, several thin lines of small stones were encountered just beneath the secondary floor. While remnants of the primary floor are not preserved in this area, the stones appear to rest upon this surface. Excavations did

not reveal any probable purpose of the stones other than as retaining walls holding the fill of the secondary floor in place.

#### Artifact Distributions of Str. 615

The interior of Str. 615 was relatively clean of refuse. Several red, black, and green beads were found in the southern half of the building (Figure 7-49). In the medial niche were two chert bifaces lance/ knife points. Similar objects were encountered near the niches of Str. 767 and 606B. The reason for the association is unknown; however, the Kowoj carried knives as symbols of war when they first encountered the Spaniards (Jones 1998: 205).

A heavy concentration of ceremonial refuse was found behind or west of Str. 615. This concentration contained animal bone, chert, obsidian, carbon, freshwater shells, and sherds of effigy, non-image censers, and non-censer vessels. Similar concentrations were found behind Str. 606 at Zacpetén, at Nixtun-Ch'ich' behind Structure 188 (Pugh 1995: 216), and at Mayapán behind Structure Q-97 (Shook and Irving 1955: 134), all of which are colonnaded halls. Two of the objects found behind Str. 615 were Colonial artifacts. One was a white clay pipe stem (Figure 7-49). White clay pipes were made by the English and Dutch in Europe and in colonial settlements beginning around A.D. 1590 (Deetz 1977: 19-20), thereby establishing a very late *terminus post quem* for the use of Str. 615. Perhaps the European pipe was incorporated into indigenous rituals that involved pipe smoking such as rites of passage described by Landa (1941: 106). Another possible Colonial artifact was a piece of miscellaneous iron (Figure 7-49).

Adjacent to the exterior of the northern wall of Str. 615, a concentration of artifacts including human bone was encountered. A large number of unidentifiable bone

fragments, some of them burned, were found in this area. Among the bones were numerous human teeth (Figure 7-50), and cranial and mandible fragments. The bones were disarticulated and found mixed with sherds, lithics, charcoal, and a green stone bead. This deposit could be related to human remains associated with Str. 607A, Op. 1000, and Op. 1001. The burned bone, if human, will present evidence of cremation of the dead, which could explain the lack of human burials in the Contact Period component of Zacpetén; however, the confirmation of such speculation awaits intense osteological analysis of the remains. Another object found in this area was a crude phallus carved in limestone (Figure 7-49). Two small quartz crystals and two hematite mirror fragments were recovered as well (Figure 7-49). More crystals and hematite mirror fragments were found along the edges of the structure as were two speleothems, which were objects containing supernatural power of rain, fertility, and healing (Brady et al. 1997: 740-746).

East of the northern concentration, at the northeast northern of the building was another deposit of refuse. This deposit included miscellaneous shell, bone, and ceramics; obsidian flakes, blades, and corner notched points; chert flakes; and sparse non-image censer sherds. Similar corner refuse deposits were found in Strs. 732, 747, and 767.

#### Op. 1000

Op. 1000 is located in a large human-made depression that lies to the north of Str. 614 and to the west of Str. 606 (Figure 7-1). The depression is oval shaped and its east to west axis is 7 m wide and its north to south axis is 9 m wide (Figure 7-51). Its depth varies depending upon which side one stands. The northern side is 1.55 m higher than the center, the southern 1.72 m higher, the eastern 3.8 m higher, and the western 1.3 m

higher. A 3 x 6 m excavation block was placed onto the southeastern quadrant of the depression in order to test activities associated with it and to determine how it was created. After the first 2 levels had been removed, the excavation was limited to a 1 x 5 m trench and later to 1 x 4 m. The vertical datum of Op. 1000 was located 3.9 m below that of Str. 602.

An important fact that must be considered in the interpretation of the strata of Op. 1000 is that even with the present layer of topsoil, water naturally flows into the pit during the hard rains of the rainy season. This water flow would have caused rapid erosion of soil into the pit as well. Hence, any hiatus in the use of the pit would have been reflected by the rapid accumulation of eroded soil unless the soil was removed.

The humus layer (Level 1) (Figure 7-52) was removed and differed from the humus layer in other areas as it contained a higher frequency of artifacts as well as medium-sized limestone rubble. The stones and artifacts likely eroded from nearby Strs. 606 and 614. Below the humus layer lay a brown to gray-brown soil with small limestone inclusions (Level 2). Once Level 2 was removed, the 18 m<sup>2</sup> excavation block was reduced to a 1 by 5 m trench extending from Unit 527, 556 to Unit 527, 560. Beneath Level 2, the stratigraphy became more complicated with medium-sized stones in a soil matrix (Level 3) in the western 2 m of the trench. In the eastern 3 m of the trench was a light gray-brown soil (Level 3a). Levels 3 and 3a are distinct deposits. Beneath Level 3a and to the west of Level 3 was a light gray soil mixed with pulverized limestone (Level 3b). In Unit 527, 560, Level 3b ended with bedrock. In the other two units, it ended when a light yellow pulverized limestone (Level 3c) was encountered to the west of Level 3. At this point, the excavation was cut to a 1 by 4 m unit. Levels 3b, 3a, and 2

appear to have been deposited as stones and soil eroded into the depression. Level 2a is a slab of limestone that collapsed from the east wall of the borrow pit.

At the base of Levels 3 and 3c was found a mass interment of human remains in a matrix of gray brown soil with charcoal inclusions (Level 4). It appears that after the deposition of the remains, a large mass of limestone rubble (Level 3) was thrown on top of the portion in the center of the depression. Level 3c was deposited soon after as limestone was chipped from the soft bedrock face in order to cover the eastern portion of the remains. The presence of this fill upon the remains suggest that they were deposited in a disarticulated state as the soil would have helped prevent the separation of remains during the decomposition process.

In order to record the articulations and exact position of each bone, each was piece plotted and bagged separately according to an alphabetic designation. All bones that were part of articulated sets were first bagged separately and these bags were then placed together in another bag. Unit 527, 557 was the first part of Level 4 to be excavated. It was then determined that Unit 527, 556 would not be excavated because of time limitations; however, Units 527, 558 and 527, 559 were excavated.

Level 4 contain an ossuary of partially disarticulated human skeletal remains (Figure 7-53). A total of 528 bones were piece-plotted in Unit 527, 557; 101 in Unit 527, 558; and 59 in Unit 527, 559. The total of plotted bones does not include numerous small bone fragments, which would dramatically increase the count. The femur was the most common paired bone encountered in the excavations with 21 samples recovered. Since the field identification of bone did not include siding, the 21 femurs suggest that there are at least 11 individuals represented in the 3 m<sup>2</sup> area. I estimate that the pit may

contain 60 to 85 individuals; however, this estimation was created by extrapolating from the excavated units and cannot take into account the true deposition of the remains.

Crania and mandibles were under-represented in the sample with only three crania, one of which belonged to a child, and four mandibles. Neither mandible was articulated with crania, but both were concentrated in the eastern 2 m of the excavation. While Unit 527, 557 had the deepest excavated deposit of bone; it was almost devoid of cranial bones identifiable as such in the field.

In his preliminary examination of the skeletal remains of Op. 1000, Duncan (1999) encountered evidence of butchering in the form of cut marks. The cut marks were thin and angular and appear to have been made by blades rather than a bifaces. They were observed on tibia and ribs. Future analysis is expected to discern cut-marks on other bones as well. Duncan (1999) also confirmed the field MNI of 11 individuals and identified 7 adults and 4 juveniles, one of which was an infant, in the excavated units.

Based upon the three excavated units of Level 4, there appears to have been an ordering in the placement of the dismembered remains. The ordering is best seen in Unit 527,558 because it has all of the discernible orientations of human remains (Figure 7-54). First, the individuals were decapitated and mandibles were removed from the crania. The mandibles and crania were placed into the pit first. Two mandibles, paired similar to those in Op. 1001, had associated vertebrae and cranial bones indicated that they were still fleshed when placed in the pit. Three crania were found at the base of Level 4 in this unit, including one of a child. The sub-crania were placed into the pit on top of the crania and mandibles. Three well-defined individual sub-crania were present in Unit 527, 558, of which the remains of Individual 1 are the most visible. This person was decapitated

and the remains placed “face” down with the right arm extended above the neck with its hand removed. An articulated hand was located at the junction of the right arm and torso and this was likely the dismembered hand. This hand was obviously not moved during burial opening rites as the bones were articulated. The right arm of Individual 1 had been removed as well. Hence, Individual 1 lay “face” down, with the limbs extended, decapitated, dismembered, and some of the remains were replaced in the wrong position, perhaps as a form of mockery.

Unit 527, 557 had the deepest remains with four or five mostly articulated individuals present. Some were stacked on top of others and limbs were disordered, as if little care was given the remains once placed in the pit. A small chert projectile point/knife was encountered in the unit, which was the only artifact in the excavations that could have been used for the dismemberment of the remains.

Unit 527, 559 had few human bones and was the eastern edge of the deposit. The deposit terminated just prior to reached the east wall of the borrow pit. For the most part, this area included disarticulated loose bones. This is the only unit in which the remains were disturbed, gnawed by animals, and poorly preserved because the fill (Level 3c) placed above them in this area was composed of loose soil rather than large stones.

The disordered extension of the limbs was typical of all remains found in Op. 1000 and indicated that the sub-crania were simply hurriedly placed into the pit with no care of positioning. Some stacking of individuals was evident, but there was no effort to orient the various remains in the same direction. As a whole, the deposit was a jumbled pile of decapitated and otherwise mutilated remains with the only ordering the placement of the crania and mandibles before the sub-crania.

Below the mass interment was a dark gray brown soil with charcoal (Level 5/6). Like Level 4, Level 5/6 became deeper toward the west. A sample of the charcoal from Level 5/6 suggests that it was primarily composed of hardwood. This carbon was dated with AMS dating (Beta-112318) (Table 1-1) and was found to have a conventional radiocarbon age of  $540 \pm 30$  years before present. The two sigma (95% probability) calibrated dates for the sample are A.D. 1321-1352 and A.D. 1389-1437. The burned wood appears to have been mounded in the center of the depression, therefore, the burning event either occurred within the pit itself or was a secondary deposit from another area. It was not a typical refuse deposit because very few artifacts were found in it. This material did not erode into the pit because, if it had done so, it would be deepest adjacent to the edges of the borrow pit as are Levels 3a and 2. Some of the charcoal of Level 5/6 was mixed with the human remains of Level 4 and no intervening strata between Level 4 and 5 was observed; therefore, the remains were deposited directly after the deposition of the burned material before additional soil could erode into the pit.

Below the burned material was a layer of small to medium-sized limestone cobbles in a matrix of pulverized limestone (Level 7). Level 7 had very few artifacts and lay on relatively flat bedrock. Cavities in the eastern bedrock face of the pit demonstrate that it was originally a borrow pit used to mine limestone. The stones and pulverized limestone of Level 7 most likely accumulated as mining progressed and the pit widened. The latest removal of limestone appears to have occurred just prior to the deposition of the human remains because there is no soil between Level 7 and Level 5/6.

### Artifact Distributions of Op. 1000

For the most part, censer sherds were restricted to Levels 1 and 2, suggesting they had eroded into the pit from Str. 606 or Str. 614. This was true of most other artifact types as well including quartz crystals, speleothems, greenstone axes, and crustacean pincers. Level 4, the ossuary stratum, included very few artifacts other than human bone, which would suggest activities other than the deposition of human remains. A small chert lance point found with the human remains could have played a part in either the slaying or dismemberment of the individuals. The same was true of Level 5, suggesting that the deposition of the charred wood and ashes was a singular activity. However, one artifact of note is a large Chompoxté Red-on-Cream: Akalché variety sherd encountered directed beneath the human remains on top of Level 5. This sherd may have been part of a smashed cache vessel, but future research must confirm this speculation. Activities in Op. 1000 resulting in the deposition of in situ artifacts were very limited; hence, it seems to have been the location of one specific event---the deposition of sacrificed human remains. While seemingly ideal as a refuse dump, no such deposits were encountered on top of the ossuary, which was, in fact, covered only by the initial deposit of stones followed by eroded soil. It appears that the area is notable for its lack of use though the site was occupied for ca. 300 years following the deposition of the ossuary, which suggests that it was the subject of some sort of taboo.

The above data suggest that soon after the last use of the depression as a borrow pit, the charred materials were deposited or burned in situ. Following the burning, humans were decapitated and the mandibles removed from the crania. The crania were placed together along with the mandibles and then the sub-crania were then piled into the

pit. The dismembered human remains were rapidly covered with limestone rubble. The excavation of the borrow pit is secondary evidence of construction as the mined limestone was likely used as building fill and masonry. Since the pit was last used just prior to the deposition of Level 4, a clear temporal correlation exists between a construction event and the deposition of the human remains. The individuals in borrow pit were likely sacrificed and dismembered during a renovation of Group A, perhaps coordinated by a major cyclical celebration. The burning of the charred material and deposition of human remains was not accompanied by other ritual activities in this area. Furthermore, there were no subsequent ritual events in the excavated portion of the pit. The resemblance of the pit to a cenote is unmistakable and it is very possible that it partially filled with water during rainy periods. As will be discussed below, this similarity to cenotes is also indicated by its use, which finds some parallel in activities discerned in a cenote at Mayapán.

#### Op. 1001

Structure 1001 was an 81 m<sup>2</sup> excavation block to the west of Str. 603 in line with an imaginary axis extending from the altar of Str. 602 across Str. 607 (Figure 7-1). It was originally thought that a building lay in the area of Op. 1001 that was a crude replica of Str. 607 (Pugh 1995), however, the excavations proved otherwise. The vertical datum of Op. 1001 was located 4.17 m below that of Str. 602.

The humus layer (Level 1) was removed, revealing a plaza surface with occasional plaster surface fragments in the eastern 3.5 m and northern 4 m of the excavation. Below the plaza surface was a fill layer at the base of which were

dismembered human remains, which rested on an earlier surface. In the southwest part of the operation was a pile of limestone, presumably the fill of an earlier structure.

The pile of stones in the southwestern part of Op. 1001 was composed of three heaps of medium-sized stones. It was initially thought that these piles of stones were collapse resting on top of a structure. The excavation of this supposed “collapse” level (Level 4) revealed that there was no masonry beneath the disorganized masses of stones and that the three heaps were actually part of one large deposit. A moderate frequency of Late Classic censer sherds was found in this area and it is believed that the stones were once part of the fill of a Late Classic period structure that once stood in the area. The facing stones of the structure may have been robbed for Late Postclassic construction. The building was likely dismantled for subsequent constructions, probably including Str. 603, which has similar Late Classic censer sherds.

Along the eastern edge of the mass of stones lay Features 1001-1 and 1001-2 (Figure 7-55). Feature 1001-1 was the primary inhumation of an adult human. The remains lay in a shallow burial pit under the eastern end of the Late Classic building fill. The bones were poorly preserved and very fragmented with an estimated 30% remaining. The individual was buried supine in a flexed position with the lower limbs rotated to the east. The humeri lay across the abdomen, but the forearms were not preserved. The head was to the north and lower extremities to the south with an estimated orientation of 5° east of north. The extremely fragmented skull faced to the east. The teeth were well-preserved with the four incisors modified with drilled holes and circular serpentine inlays. The interment did not contain grave goods. It is possible that Fea. 1001-1 lay below the stairs of the earlier construction and was part of a

dedication ritual, but this is speculative. The bone was not poorly preserved, but it had been crushed. This, in addition to the fact that the remains are incomplete suggests that it may have been disturbed, perhaps by the demolition of the building.

West of Fea. 1001-1 lay Fea 1001-2, the superior portion of a human neurocranium. The neurocranium rested upside-down, like a cup, on top of the heap of limestone and was most likely deposited after the destruction of the building. Some of these bones were blackened suggesting that something had been burned inside the "cup." The cranium displayed biparieto-occipital deformation. Cut marks were not observed by the naked eye on the broken upper edges of the cranial "cup." Numerous small bones and teeth, most burned, were found within the cranium. The reason for the inverted cup-like position of the remains is uncertain. The positioning of the cranium suggests intentional placement. It is possible that most of the body was cremated and the remains were placed in the cup.

In the portion of Op. 1001 excavated to the east and north of the heaps of stone was found an old plaza surface composed of ballast with occasional patches of a thin plaster surface. The thin floor and its ballast were excavated as Level 3. Level 3 of Op. 1001 was part of the same event as the second construction (Levels 3 and 4) of Str. 603. Level 3 of Op. 1001 contained a relatively high frequency of human teeth and small cranial fragments. At the base of this fill lay several in situ deposits of human skeletal remains on top of an eroded surface, suggesting a large sacrificial event. A piece of burned clay encountered in the fill was dated with AMS dating (AA35234) (Table 1-1) and found to have a conventional radiocarbon age of  $880 \pm 40$  years before present. The two sigma (95% probability) calibrated dates for the sample are A.D. 1037-1227 and

A.D. 1232-1240. However, Late Postclassic Patojo Modeled sherds found in the fill suggest that the burned clay originated much earlier than the last construction of the plaza. The burned clay was obviously Early Postclassic residue in Late Postclassic fill.

Below the fill of Level 3 was the top of a surface with occasional fragments of plaster (Level 4) that appears to have been associated with the primary construction (Level 5) of Str. 603. On top of this surface were found six human mandibles, associated vertebra, a skull, and small cranial fragments recovered as Special Deposits. Special Deposit 1 was a 90% complete adult human mandible that lay with the teeth upward with the mental protuberance (chin) to the west. None of the tooth crowns remained, but four roots remained in their sockets. Since the mandible lacked evidence of resorbing in the alveolar region, the teeth were removed just prior to the individual's death or by the excavator. Unfortunately, the latter seems likely in this case, as there were numerous teeth found in this unit and none of the other mandibles of Level 3 demonstrated postmortem removal of teeth. Associated with the mandible were numerous cranial fragments that would have composed approximately 10% of an adult cranium. Most of these fragments composed a right parietal.

Special Deposit 2 included a nearly (95%) complete adult human mandible and several cervical vertebrae. It lay with its inferior portion downward and the chin was to the northeast. The mandible was robust and 15 slightly worn teeth were in their sockets. The lower first molar was absent and the alveolus was completely resorbed. The cervical vertebrae included nearly complete first (atlas), second (axis), third, and fourth cervical vertebrae. No evidence of cutting was visible to the naked eye on the fourth cervical

vertebra. These vertebrae were articulated and found in the proper anatomical position relative to the mandible and were, therefore, attached by flesh when deposited.

Special Deposit 3 included an adult human mandible and the upper two cervical vertebrae. The mandible was 70% complete, but, as with Special Deposit 1, the teeth were removed by the excavator. It lay with the teeth upward and the chin to the northeast. Seventy percent of the first and 60% of the second cervical vertebra were found associated with the mandible. Special Deposit 3 was encountered only 34 cm north of Special Deposit 2; therefore, the two mandibles appear to have been paired.

Special Deposit 4 included an adult human mandible and the upper two cervical vertebrae. The mandible was nearly complete and included 15 slightly worn teeth, all of which had fallen from their sockets either prior to or during excavation. It lay with the inferior portion downward and the chin to the west. The first cervical vertebra was nearly complete, but the second was extremely fragmented preventing an examination for cut marks. The vertebrae were found in the proper anatomical position relative to the mandible and were attached to it by flesh when deposited.

Special Deposit 5 included an adult human mandible and the upper two cervical vertebrae. The mandible was complete with 15 teeth articulated with the exception of one incisor, the alveolus of which appears to have been resorbed. The teeth were not observably worn; therefore, this individual was probably younger than the previous three, but the presence of third molars demonstrates adulthood. Unlike the previous mandibles, this specimen lay on its left side with the chin to the north. Associated with the mandible was 50% of the first cervical vertebra and most of the second. Examination of the second cervical vertebra revealed a straight break or cut that may have occurred during the

decapitation of the individual. Special Deposit 5 was located only 3 cm north of Special Deposit 4 and the two appear to have been paired.

Special Deposit 6 included part of a mandible and cranial fragments. Forty percent of the left side of the mandible was present with the break occurring on the posterior side of the socket of the lower left premolar. Three molars and the second premolar were present and were not observably worn. The cranial fragments were found 14 cm east of the mandible. These fragments included 50% of the occipital and 60% of the right parietal. It is uncertain whether they belonged to the same individual as the mandible as cranial fragments were encountered throughout Level 3.

Special Deposit 7 included a complete human skull with an articulated mandible. The skull rested upright and faced to the southwest. Biparieto-occipital deformation was observed on the cranium. Most of the teeth were present and exhibited moderate wear. The maxilla was fragmentary and only thirteen of the teeth were recovered. The mandible was intact with only the lower left second molar missing. The gonial angles on both sides of the mandible were broken and the left side has a straight break or cut that may have occurred during the decapitation of the individual. No vertebrae were present, suggesting either a very close cut during the decapitation or later butchering.

Special Deposit 8 was a bundle of human long bones running approximately north/ south though slightly skewed  $6^{\circ}$  to  $7^{\circ}$  east of north. Present were a right fibula (60%), left fibula (90%), right tibia (70%), left tibia (50%), right femur (90%), left femur (90%), right humerus (85%), right ulna (70%), right radius, and a few fragments of the pelvis. The lack of recurrence in specific bones suggests that the deposit represents the secondary burial of both legs and the right arm of a single individual. These remains are

somewhat problematic as their close association with one another and the lack of remains of hands, feet, and patella suggest that no flesh remained at the time of internment.

However, the remains lie near the mandibles and at the base of Level 3. It seems unlikely that the bones belonged to the same individual as one of the mandibles, since the latter still retained their flesh at the time of deposition. Therefore, one must assume that activities that occurred just prior to the construction event represented by Level 3 included more than just the decapitation and dismemberment of human beings.

After the removal of Level 03, four 1x1 m units were excavated into the underlying fill in order to search for internments similar to Fea. 1001-1. The sampling of Level 4 occurred in Units 498, 564; 500, 563; 503, 561; and 503, 562. Level 4 was a gray brown soil with small limestone inclusions. These sample units excavated 10 to 20 cm deep until an earlier fill layer of large stones was encountered. No burial or other features were found in these units.

In sum, six mandibles, a complete skull, and a bundle of human long bones were found in Level 3 of Op. 1001. Four of the mandibles had associated cervical vertebrae and were associated with fragments of human crania. The cervical vertebrae associated with the mandibles were found in the proper anatomical position demonstrating that they were part of the same individual. The individuals were beheaded and then their mandibles were cut from their crania. The fact that the vertebrae were present demonstrates that the mandibles were removed while the flesh remained on the body. The skull of Fea. 1001-8 was beheaded without leaving vertebrae and the mandible was not removed from the cranium. In addition to the special deposits, numerous cranial fragments and teeth were found throughout Level 3. It appears that at least part of the

butchering occurred in this area. Similar deposits found near Str. 607 of Group A and Str. 766 of Group C suggest that similar activities may have taken place in these areas. While a bundle of long bones (Fea. 1001-10) was found in Op. 1001, overall, the bones of the appendicular skeleton are poorly represented.

#### Artifact Distributions of Op. 1001

Op. 1001 produced two sets of distribution maps, those of Level 1, which lay above the latest plaster surface and those of Level 3 that lay above the earlier surface associated with the human remains. Level 3 of Op. 1001 corresponds with Level 3 of Str. 603; hence, the distribution of Level 3 of the latter is discussed here as well.

The superficial soils on top of the latest plaster surface (Level 1) of Op. 1001 did not contain many interesting deposits. For the most part, the area was relatively clean. Sparse censer sherds were encountered, but so were most other classes of artifacts. However, as in many places that tend to be clean, such as open halls, small artifacts remained (Figure 7-56). Four quartz crystals were encountered which was a relatively high frequency given the small area of excavation. Additional finds include the sherd of a small cup, a couple of beads, a piece of iron, and two chert bifaces (not pictured). The presence of bifaces is relevant given the nature of the deposits in Level 3 and because similar artifacts were found in the latter. Eleven human teeth found in Level 1 likely belonged in Level 3.

The fill (Level 3) between the last and previous surfaces of the plaza of Op. 1001 and the first and second constructions of Str. 603 seems to have contained some in situ artifacts. Most censer types, especially Patojo Modeled Censer sherds (Figure 7-57); miscellaneous shell; and chert corner-notched points were more highly concentrated

under the excavated area of Str. 603 than in Op. 1001. As mentioned, Patojo Modeled sherds were also concentrated in this area of Str. 603 in Level 1; hence, the pattern may be repeated here. In addition, a small piece of gold foil was cached in 501, 573 (Figure 7-58). A similar artifact was found in Str. 607 and pieces of copper foil were encountered in Cache 4 of Str. 602. All three deposits occurred in the line of the medial axis of Str. 602.

As mentioned, numerous human remains were found in Op. 1001, Level 3, but a mandible (Figure 7-58), cranial fragments, and some teeth were also found east of Str. 603 in Level 3. Hence, the special deposits of human remains were associated with the fill of the latest construction of the plaza beyond Op. 1001. As in Level 1, crystals were found in Level 3 of Op. 1001, but in this case, all were in Unit 499, 562 (Figure 7-59). These objects likely composed a cache. A few chert bifaces were also encountered in Level 3, which may have been used in the dismembering of human remains.

As mentioned, the first plaster surface below Level 1 of Op. 1001 was associated with the latest construction of Str. 603 and the second surface below Level 3 of Op. 1001 corresponds with the earlier construction of Str. 603. The deposits of human body parts in Op. 1001 suggest a sacrificial event associated with the latest construction of the plaza surface as well as the ultimate version of Str. 603. The fill of the plaza (Level 3) had to have been placed prior to the decomposition of the flesh. Otherwise, the vertebrae would have been scattered and all of the bones would have been subject to exposure factors such as weathering and carnivore and rodent gnawing. It is possible that the sacrifice was part of a dedication rite involving the reconstruction of the ceremonial group. Most structures in Group A demonstrate two Late Postclassic period constructions and the

sacrifices could have preceded each major construction event. Human mandibles appear to have had a symbolically important part in the second construction.

### Group A Summary

Excavations at Zacpetén have revealed that it was occupied from the Middle Preclassic period to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The present dissertation primarily concerns the Postclassic/ Contact period civic ceremonial center of the site, Group A (Figure 7-1). Group A includes major deposits during the Middle Preclassic, Late/Terminal Classic, and Late Postclassic periods. A white clay pipe stem suggests that use of the group continued in some fashion during the Contact period. Several pieces of iron were found in the group, as well, but could be modern. The Early Classic period is suspiciously underrepresented in Group A, but light deposits are found elsewhere. The buildings of Group A occur in assemblages, but ritual practices differed among the various buildings. While the late period is of primary concern, activities and constructions in this period must be considered in relation to the larger history of Group A.

East of the small sakbe that divides Group A in half is a Mayapán-style temple assemblage. The temple or god house of this group was Str. 602, which stood on a relatively high platform facing west. This building contained a medial altar, interior altar, L-shaped bench, and medial niche. It contained numerous paired large effigy censers with various deities. This building also contained ritual offering paraphernalia such as small cups, a large polychrome quincunx cup, and a red slipped drum.

Str. 605, the oratorio of the assemblage, was also a god house, but on a lower platform than the temple. Note the L-shaped bench and the niche apparently leading

“nowhere.” This small god house contained a pair of smaller effigy censers representing a single deity. This deity has only been encountered in the Kowoj area and was intentionally separated from the other deities.

Str. 606A is the open hall of the temple assemblage and has a large C-shaped wall and bench with no medial feature. Two low masonry rectangles in building appear to be aligned with Str. 601. In situ artifacts are sparse, but include quartz crystals, possibly used for divination. Str. 606B is an earlier version of 606A, but differs as it is larger and has a medial niche; however, the artifact content is similar.

Two types of shrines were encountered in Group A. Raised shrines such as Str. 601 are similar to those found at Mayapán and are small rectangular buildings with medial altars. Inside Str. 601 was a concentration of non-image spiked censer sherds. Raised shrines may be associated with ancestor veneration; however, elongated shrines are another matter. Elongated shrines, such as Str. 607, are long, narrow, and low platforms with two or three small altars. On the eastern end of Str. 607, near the temple, Patojo Modeled image censers were used. At the end of the elongated shrine is an independent rectangular altar. Associated with the end altar were human teeth, and mandible and cranial fragments. The human remains associated with this altar suggest that it may have been the location of the sacrifice and dismemberment of individuals found in Operations 1000 and 1001.

The buildings that make up the temple assemblage in Group A were a repeated configuration of ritual settings. However, this was not the only Late Postclassic ceremonial area in Group A. On the other side of the *sakbe* are several other important ritual settings. The *sakbe* that runs north to south cutting the plaza in half was a ritual

setting as well. Among the Maya, *sakbe* are multivalent symbols representing creation, order, and social relationships.

In Op. 1001 lay a deposit of human remains including crania, mandibles with articulated vertebrae, and a bundle of long bones. In the northwest corner of Group A is Op. 1000, a large, human-constructed circular pit into bedrock. This pit contained disarticulated human adult and child body parts. The remains were placed directly upon a layer of charred material dated to the late fourteenth to early fifteenth century. This was the only major activity associated with the pit, though some small offerings may have been placed into it. The pit seems to have been parallel to cenotes of Yucatán and caves throughout Mesoamerica.

South of Op. 1000 was another oratorio, Str. 614, that had no in-situ artifacts except small project points, greenstone/serpentine axe heads, and yellow crystals. However, Str. 614 stands between the plaza and the borrow pit and may have been used to mediate interaction with the cave/faux-cenote component of Zacpetén's axis-mundi.

Str. 615 was another open hall to the west of the *sakbe*, which differed from Str. 606B because it had a medial niche; however, like the latter, it contained two masonry rectangles in one side of the building. In addition, like Str. 606 as a whole, it contained various divination objects such as crystals, but also had hematite mirror fragments, speleothems, and a limestone phallus.

Each of the building types in Group A was the setting of specific ritual behaviors. However, the various ritual settings of Group A were not conterminously utilized, but accreted through two distinct Postclassic construction episodes, the later of which experienced a major reconstruction. In order to fully understand the Postclassic

architectural ontogeny of Group A, one must first examine what is known of the Terminal Classic period occupation of the group.

In the Terminal Classic period (Figure 7-60), Group A contained what appears to have been a palace on the northern side of the plaza. Opposite of this palace was a shrine with associated censer sherds. On the eastern and western sides of the plaza was a building of unknown form and function, possibly another shrine. This group was likely a Plaza Plan 2 domestic group, if the monuments had been brought from Group B. If the monuments had not been moved, then it could have been a Twin Pyramid complex; however, the palace is on the wrong side of the plaza so this is unlikely. As mentioned, the two types of ceremonial groups were related (Becker 1971: 183).

During the Early Postclassic or early Late Postclassic (Figure 7-61), Group A was reconstructed, but the basic layout of the group was retained. Str. 606B, a large colonnaded hall was constructed upon the palace, Str. 601, and a raised shrine, upon the earlier shrine. Classic period monuments were placed into the substructure walls of Structures 601 and 606. Given that the Postclassic shrine is built upon the Terminal Classic shrine and the open hall upon a palace, continuous use is evident and one might suggest continuity between Terminal Classic and initial Postclassic occupations. However, the transition between the two periods should be investigated further as it is uncertain whether Str. 606B was an Early Postclassic or early Late Postclassic building.

In the fifteenth century, Group A experienced a major transformation (Figure 7-1). The human remains were placed into Op. 1000; facing stones are robbed from the bench Str. 606B; and a Mayapán-style temple assemblage was constructed. In addition to the temple assemblage, the ceremonial *sakbe*, Str. 614, a second oratorio, and Str. 615,

another colonnaded hall were constructed in the Late Postclassic period. The human remains in Op. 1001 were deposited during a later renovation event of this group.

Activity themes of the buildings of Late Postclassic Group A include multiple deity, lineage deity/ancestor, fertility, rain, sacrifice, auto-sacrifice, creation, and renewal ritual.

In Group A, the primary differentiation is between the east and the west with the dividing line being Str. 603, the *sakbe*. The east is the place of the god houses, Str. 602 and 605, which rest upon raised platforms. The gods lived in the heavens; hence, the raised area to the east of the *sakbe* may have been the raised-up sky. To the west of the *sakbe* were found cremated human remains, several mandible and other bone caches, and a large pit containing disarticulated human remains, all obviously indicative of death. The pit was likely a chthonic icon and the western side of the plaza was the place of death, the Underworld. In addition to the cosmic differentiation represented by the architectural symbolism of Group A, there is social division as well. Some highland communities with dual organization divide the plaza in half with an imaginary line with one group controlling one side (Hunt and Nash 1967: 262). Str. 603 could be related to the imaginary line dividing the plaza, but in this case, it has become reified (Pugh and Rice 1997: 524-525). One open hall lies on the eastern side of the plaza and the other on the western side of the plaza. Since these are believed to be council halls, eastern and western corporate groups are indicated. If the Petén Kowoj were organized similarly to the Lacandon Kowoj, then it is possible that these two halls were used by the two *onen* of the Kowoj moiety; hence, society and cosmos were paralleled.

Continuity appears to exist between the Terminal Classic and initial Postclassic uses of Group A. This continuity may have been intentionally displayed by the

placement of Terminal Classic monuments in the walls of the latter. Of course, this could have alternatively been an attempt at a mockery of the past. The appearance of the temple assemblage in the fifteenth century seems to have represented a shift from the open hall as the central building in the group to the temple as the central building. As mentioned, temple assemblages seem associated with the Kowoj and open hall focused groups, the Itza; therefore, the transformation may indicate the arrival of the latter. It also seems to signal the arrival of a dualistic social system.

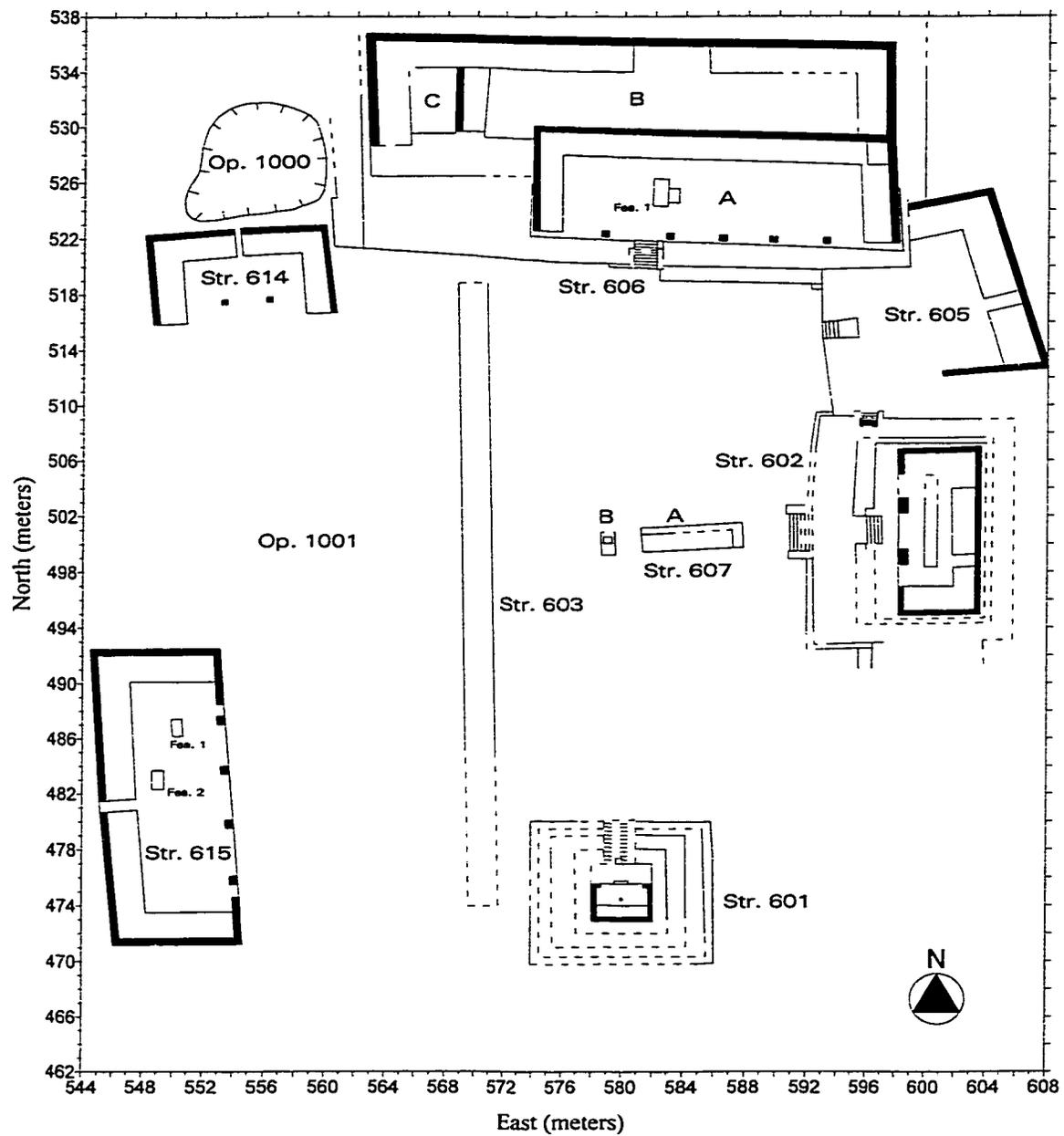


Figure 7-1. Zacpetén, Group A, Ceremonial Area.

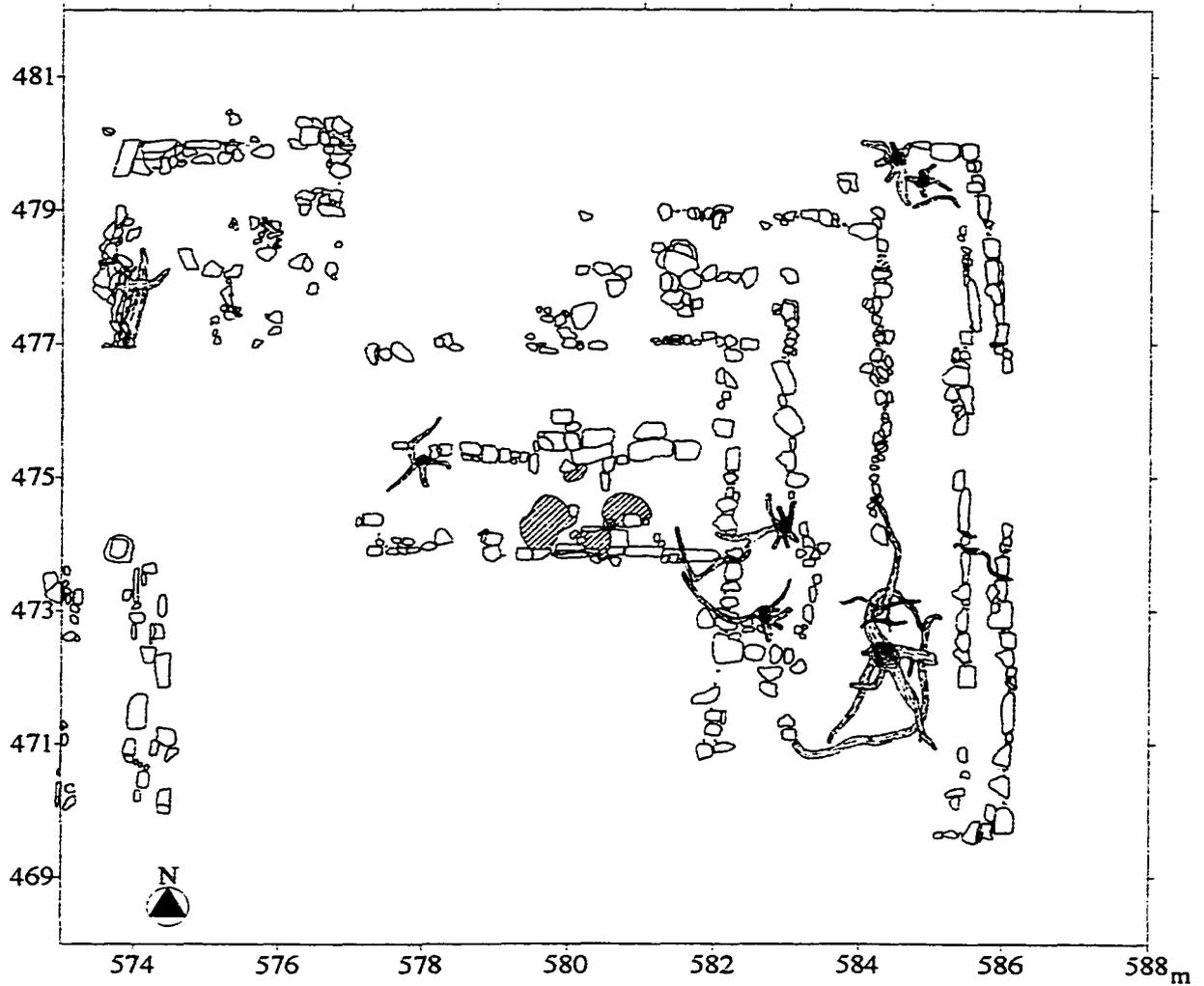


Figure 7-2. Zacpetén, Str. 601, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

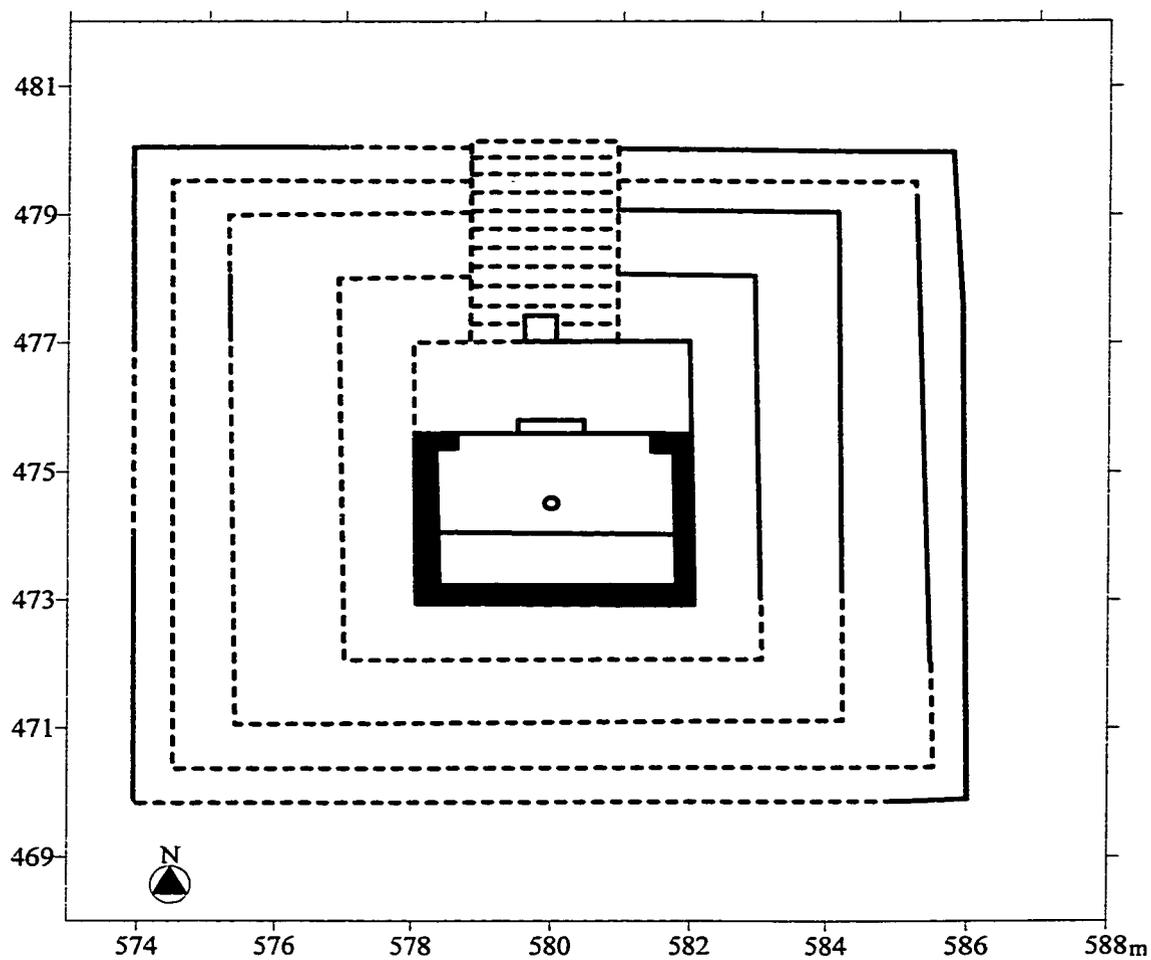
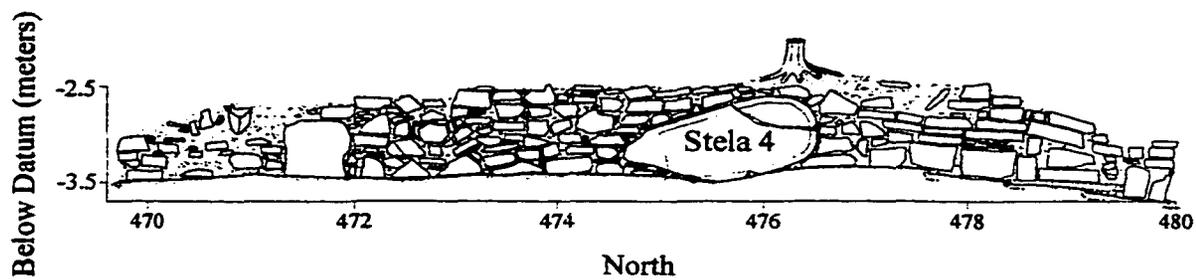
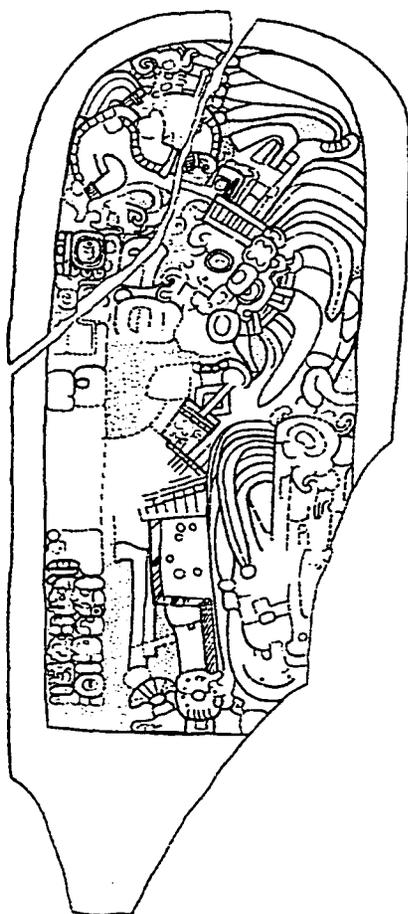


Figure 7-3. Zacpetén, Str. 601, Plan and Cross-Sections.



A. Stela 4 In Situ in the East Wall of the Lower Terrace of Structure 601.



B. Preliminary Drawing of Stela 4.

Figure 7-4. Zacpetén, Str. 601, Stela 4.

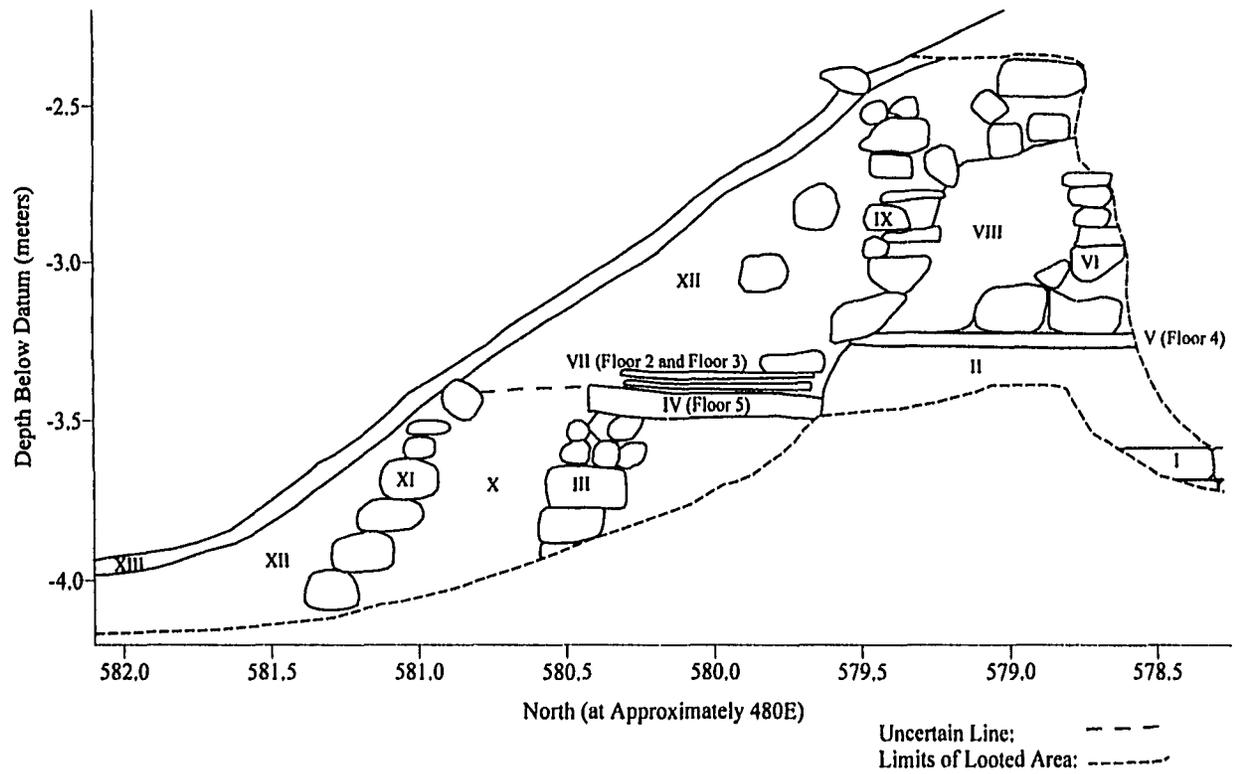


Figure 7-5. Zacpetén, Str. 601, Northern Looter's Trench, East Profile.

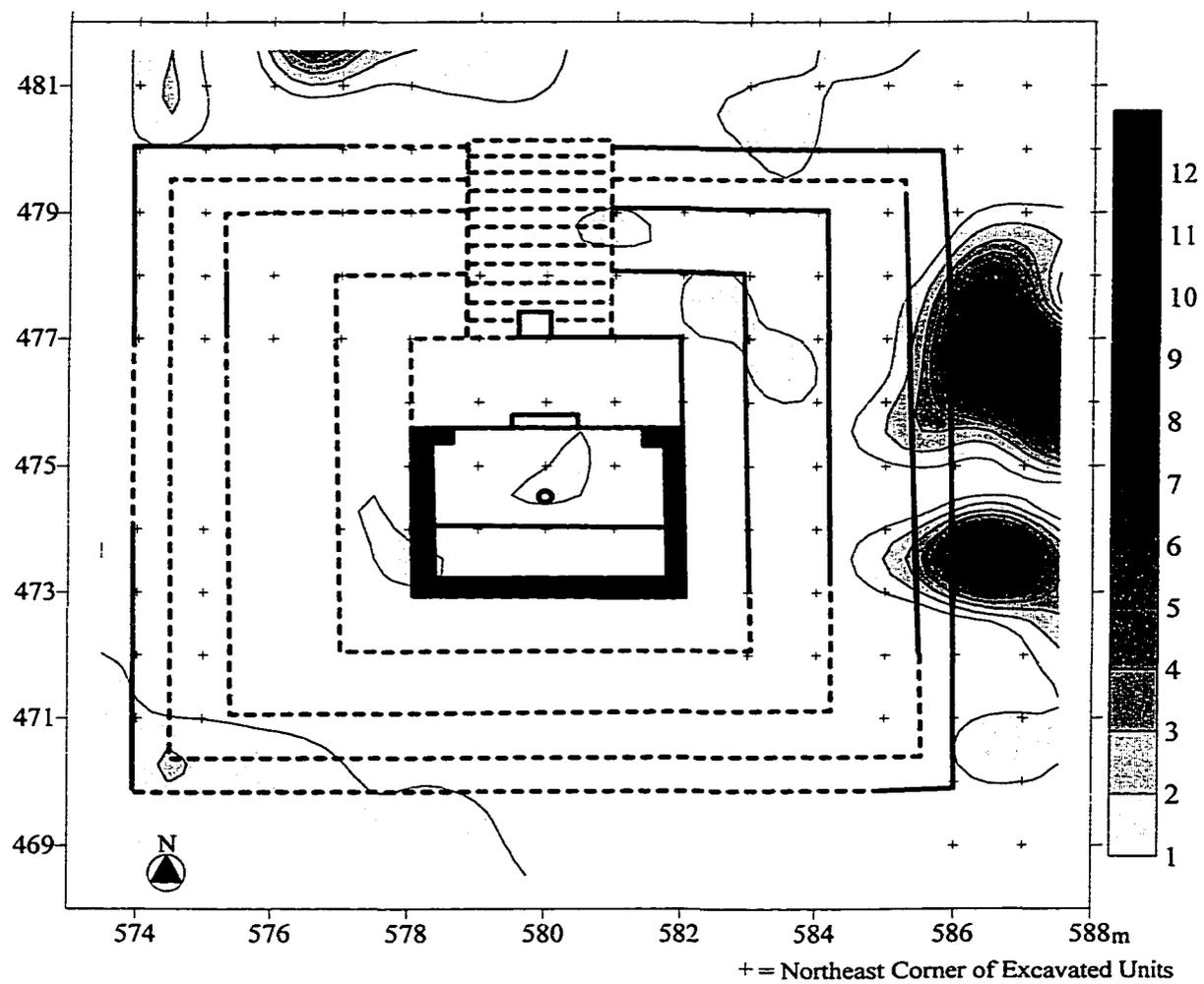


Figure 7-6. Zacpetén, Str. 601, Patojo Modeled Var. Patojo.

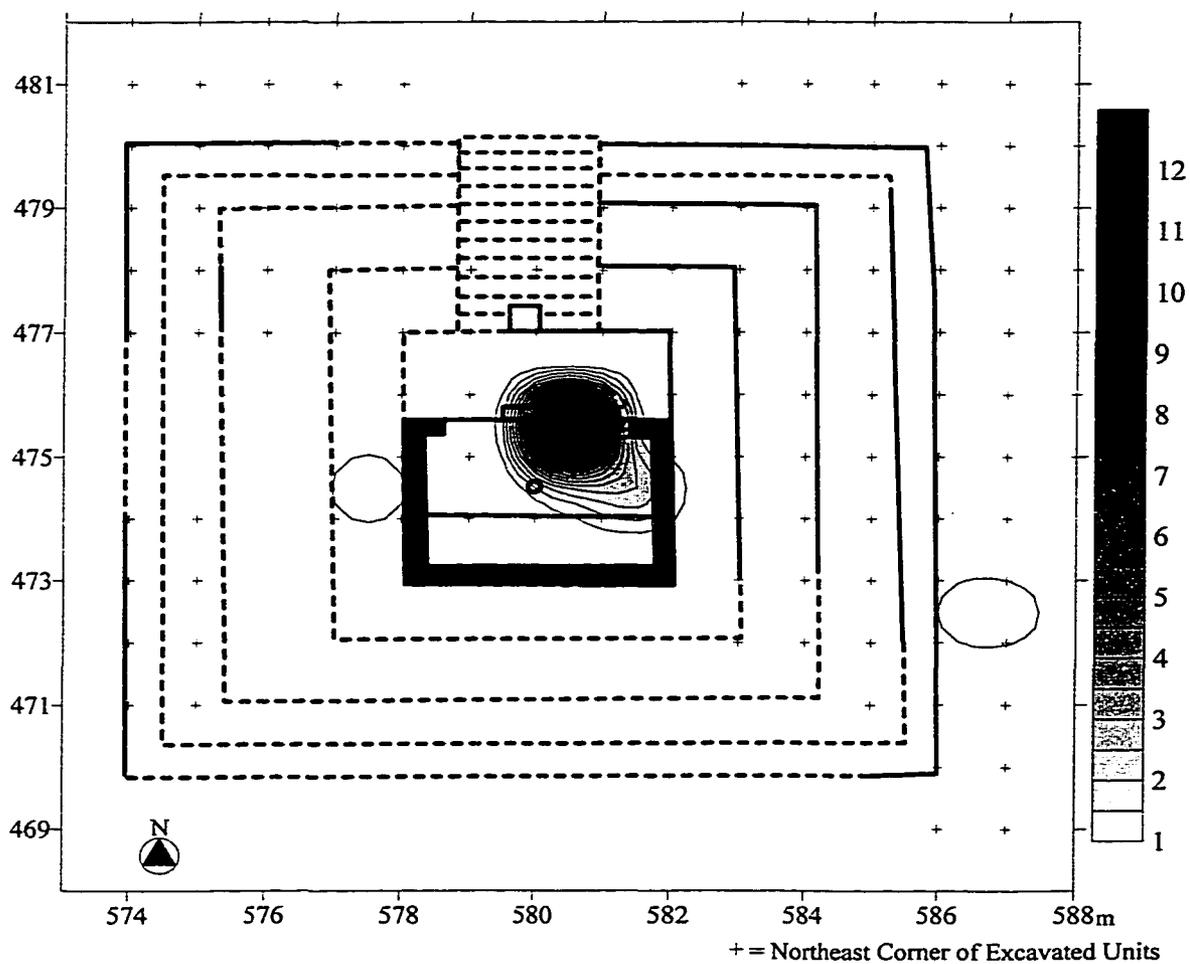


Figure 7-7. Zacpetén, Str. 601, Gotas Composite.

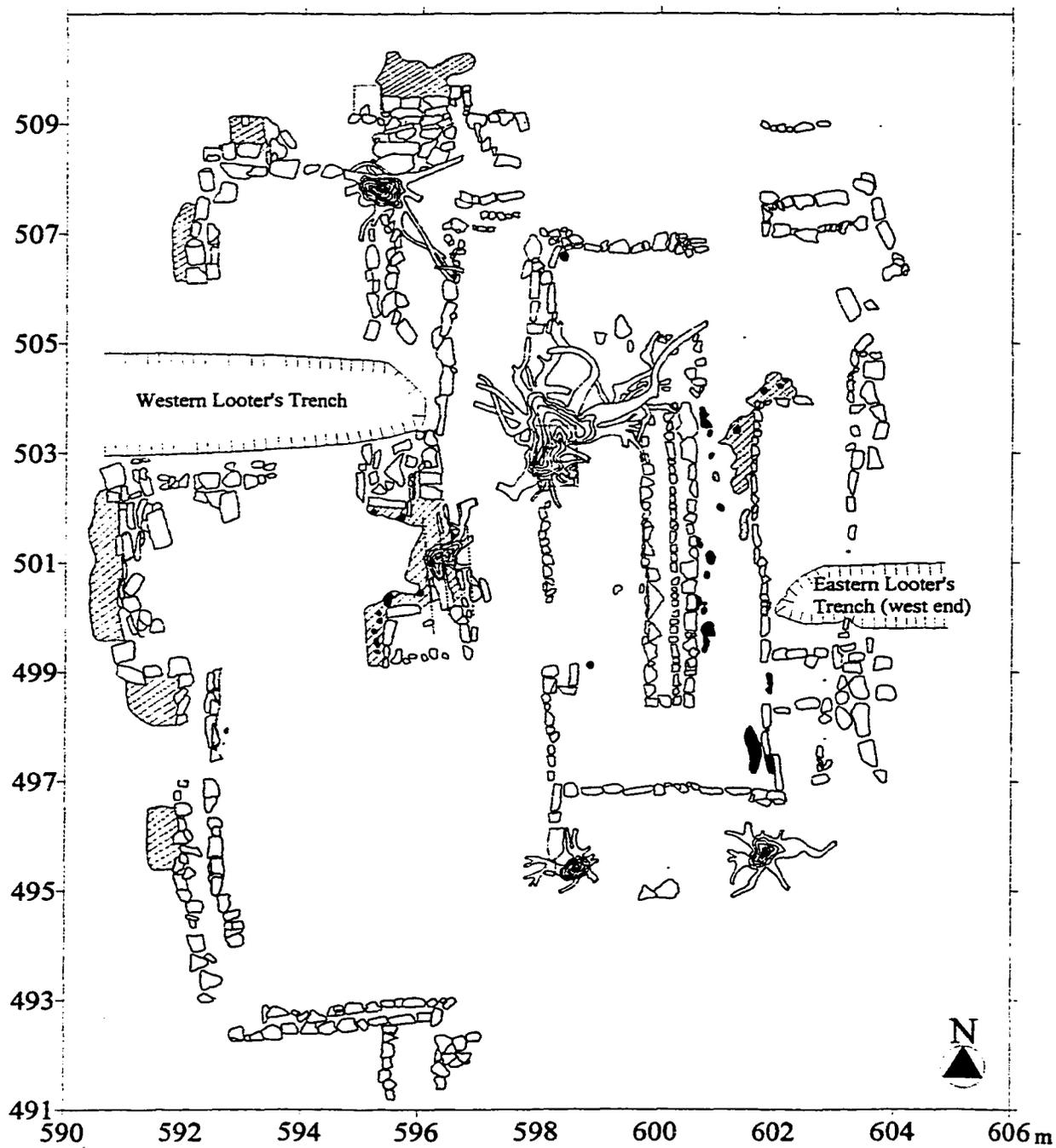


Figure 7-8. Zacpetén, Str. 602, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

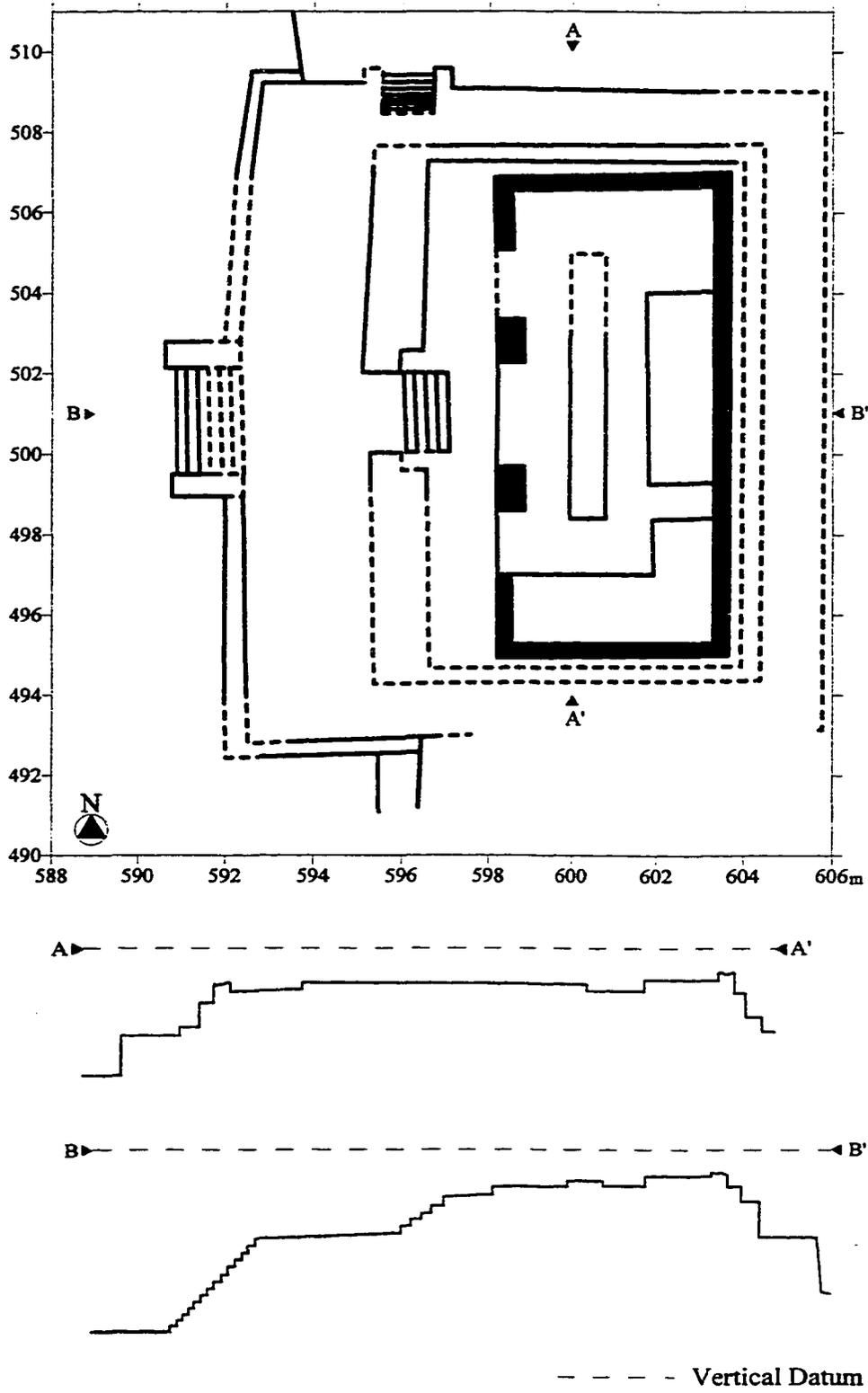


Figure 7-9. Zacpetén, Str. 602, Plan and Cross-Sections.

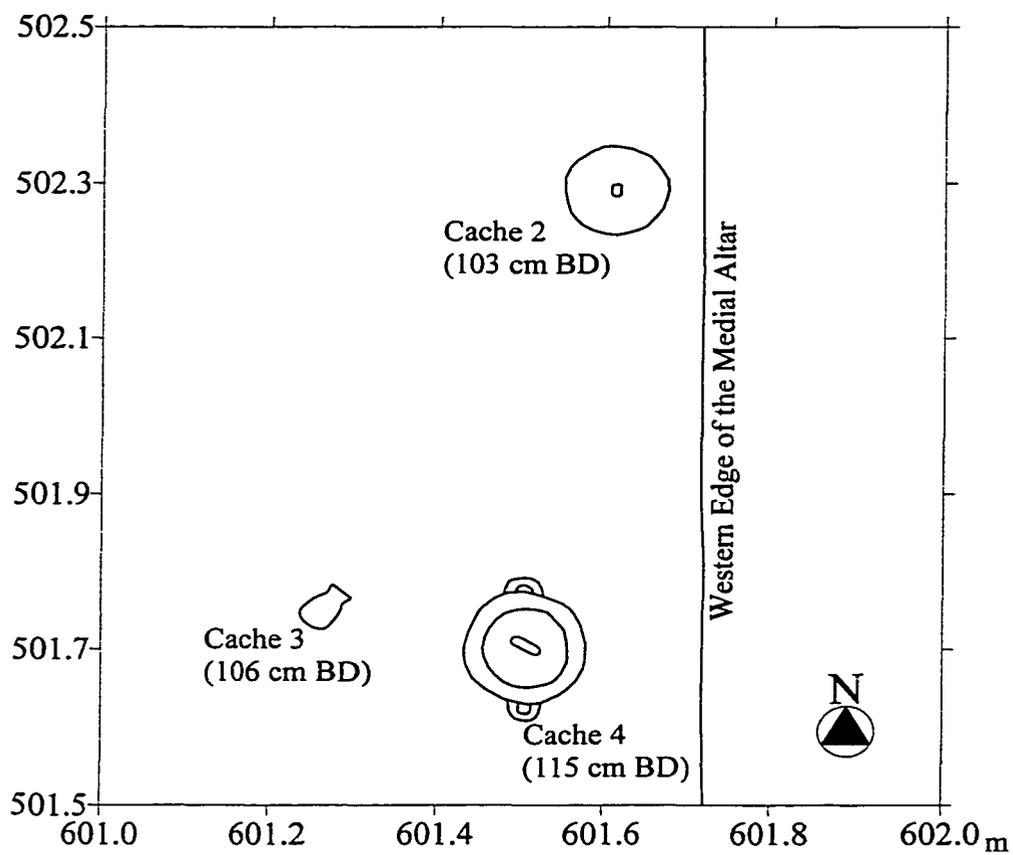
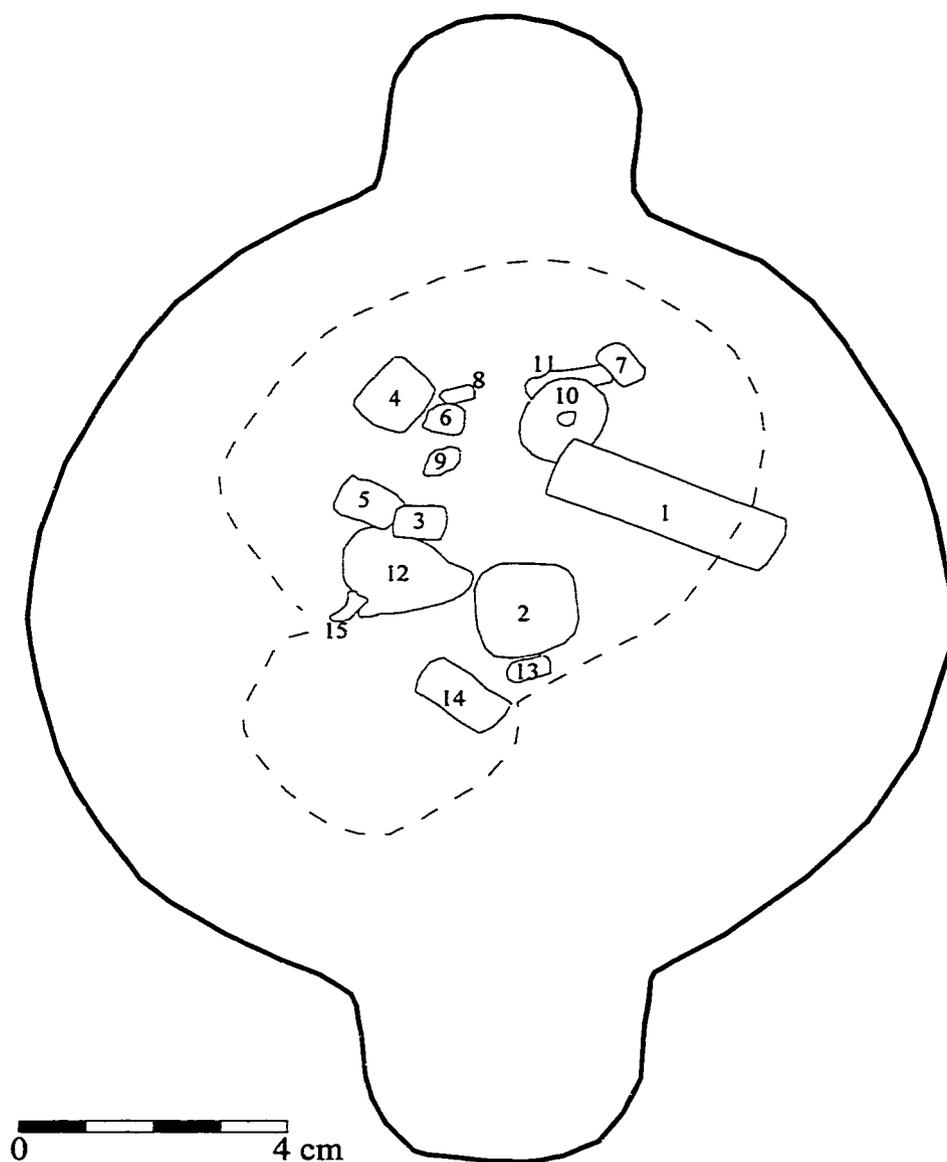


Figure 7-10. Zacpetén, Str. 602, Plan of Cache 2, Cache 3, and Cache 4.



- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1- Tubular Greenstone Bead (burned)             | 9- Copper Foil                     |
| 2- Flat Greenstone Bead                         | 10- Round Greenstone Pendant       |
| 3- Tubular Greenstone Bead                      | 11- Copper Foil                    |
| 4- Flat Greenstone Mosaic Stone?                | 12- Greenstone Pendant (burned)    |
| 5- Tubular Greenstone Bead                      | 13- Tubular Red/Orange Stone Bead  |
| 6- Tubular Stone Bead                           | 14- Tubular Greenstone Bead        |
| 7- Tubular Bone Bead                            | 15- Greenstone Pendant             |
| 8- Tubular Greenstone Bead                      | 16- Quartz Crystal (not pictured)  |
|   | 17- Shell Fragments (not pictured) |
| - - - Outline of the Residue in the Vessel Base |                                    |

Figure 7-11. Zacpetén, Str. 602, Cache 4, Artifacts within the Cache Vessel.

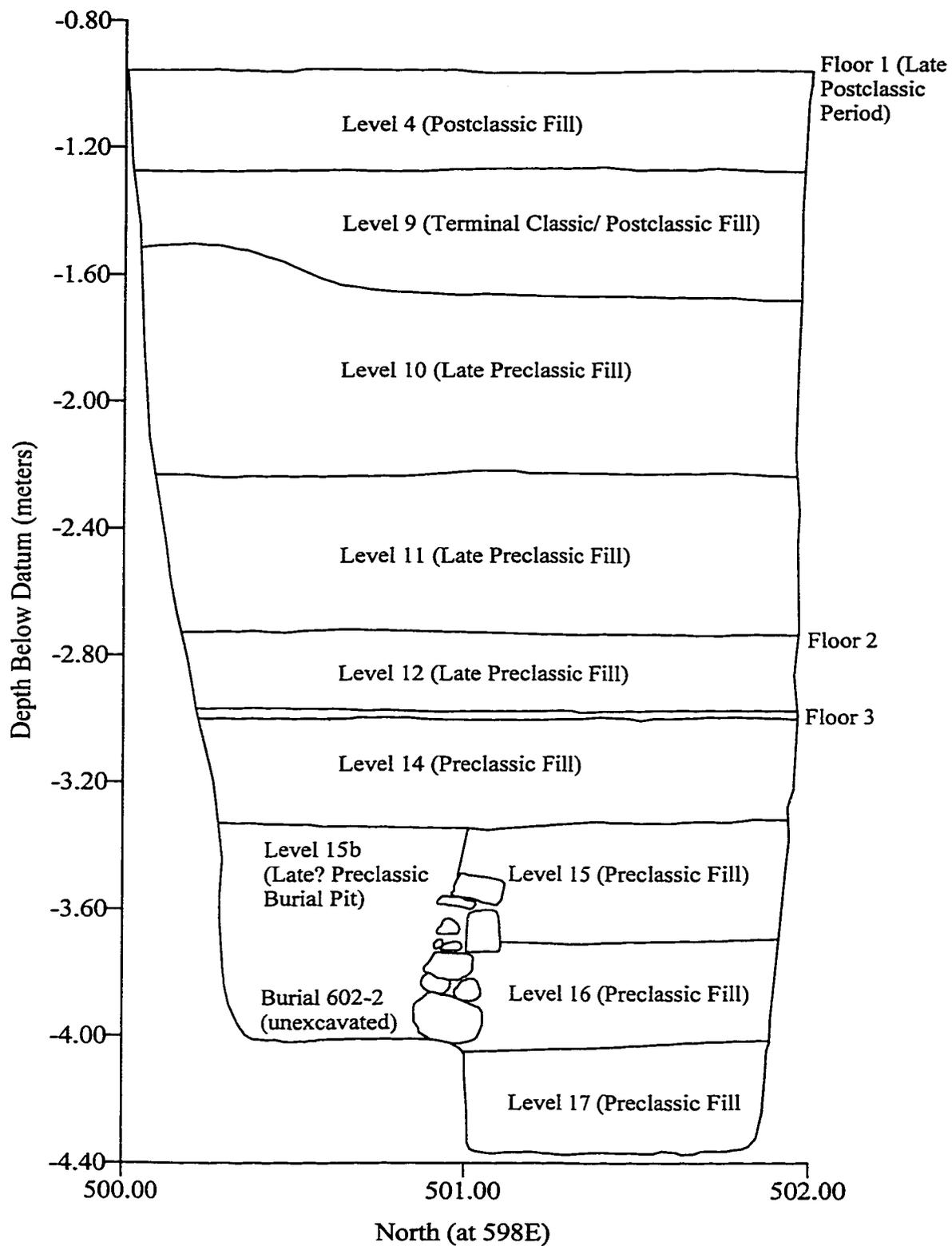


Figure 7-12. Zacpetén, Str. 602, Test Unit 502, 600, West Profile.

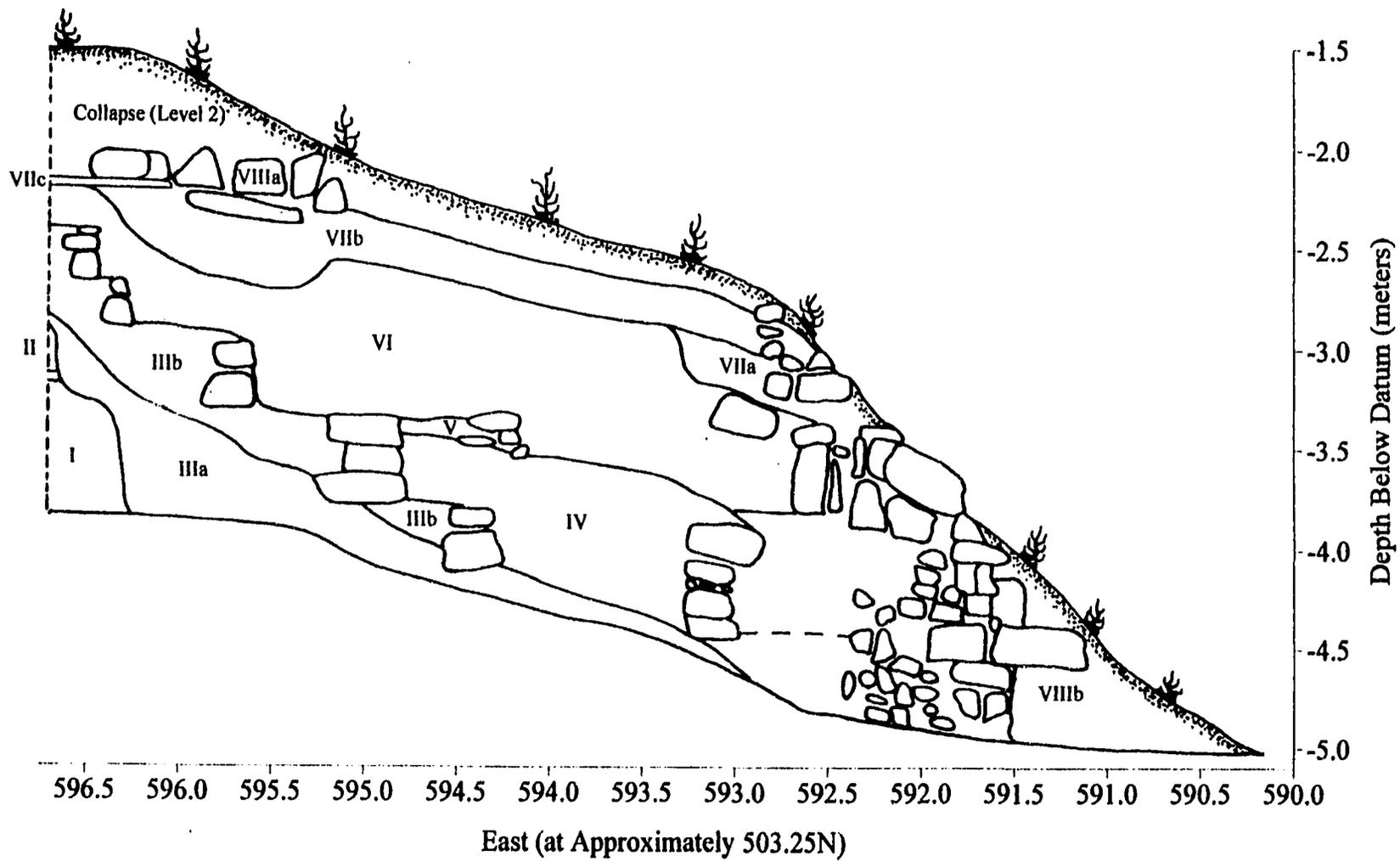


Figure 7-13. Zacpetén, Str. 602, Western Looter's Trench, South Profile.

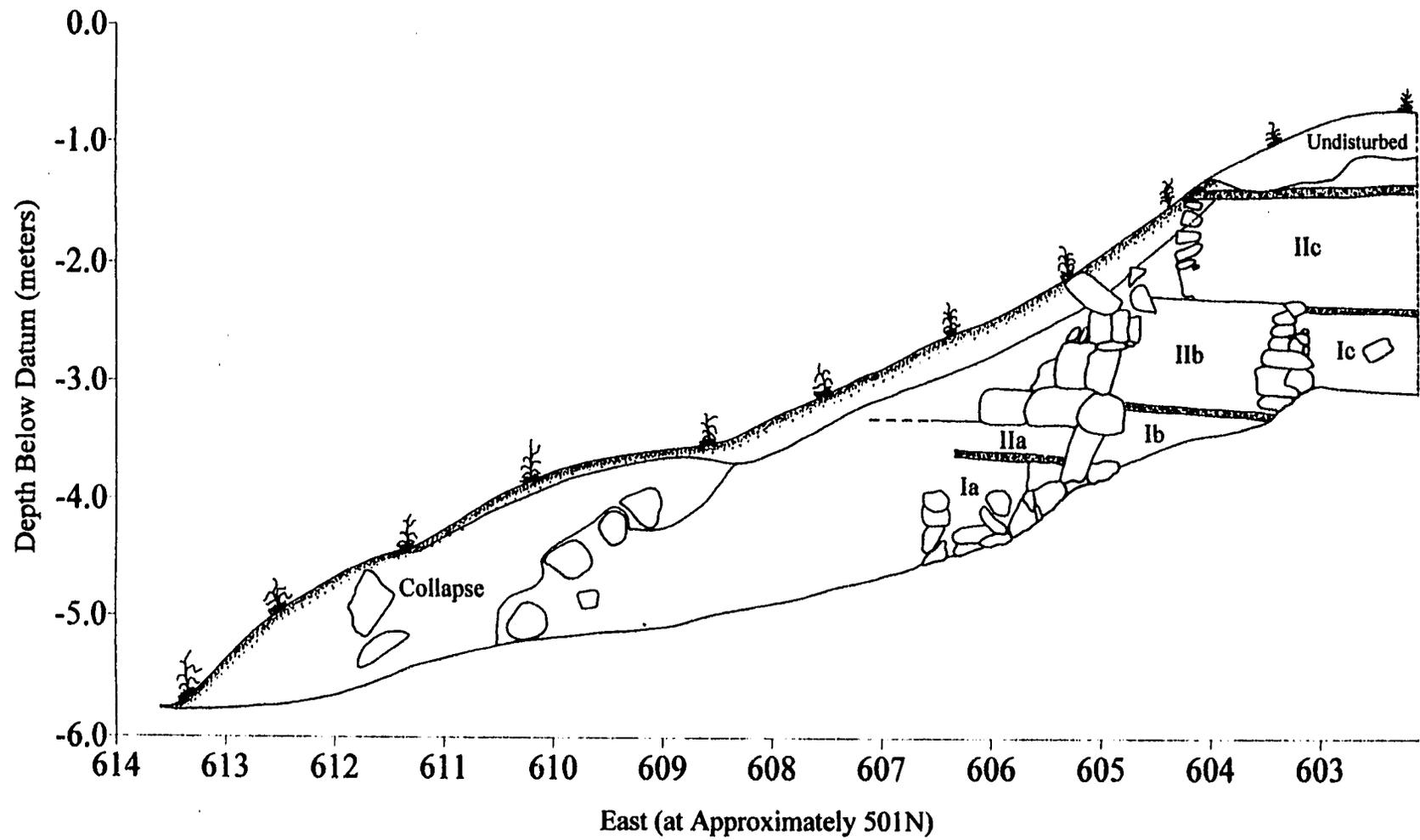


Figure 7-14. Zacpetén, Str. 602, Eastern Looter's Trench, South Profile.

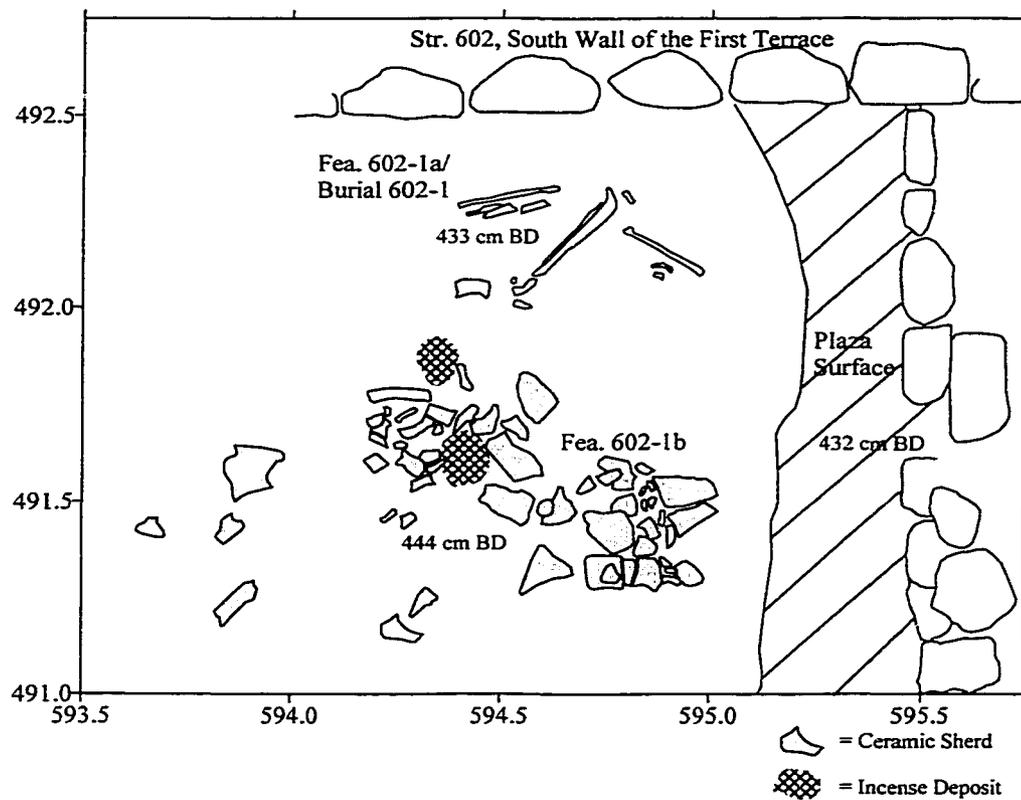


Figure 7-15. Zacpetén, Str. 602, Feature 602-1 (Burial 602-1).

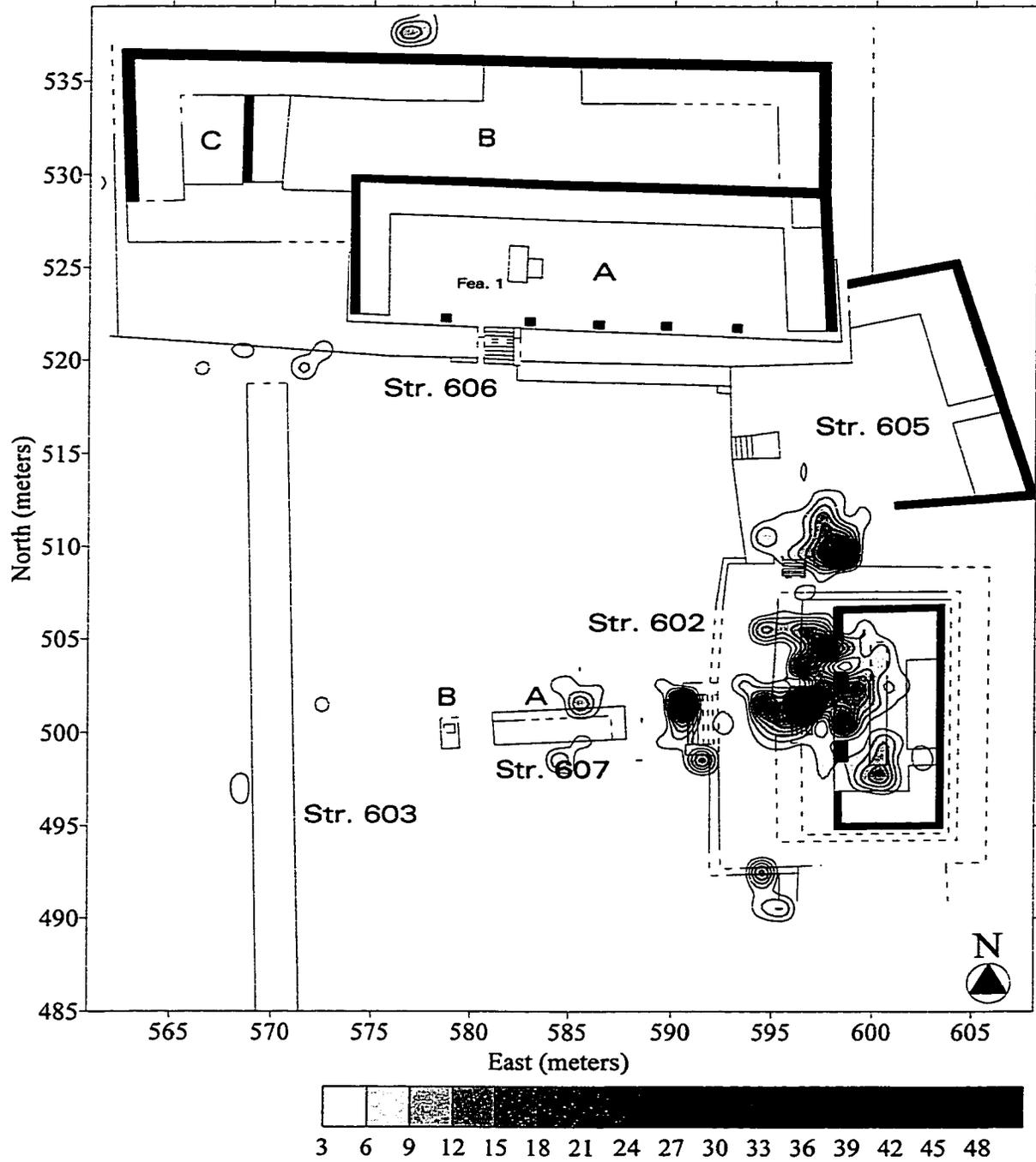


Figure 7-16. Zacpetén, Group A, Patojo Modeled Var. Patojo.

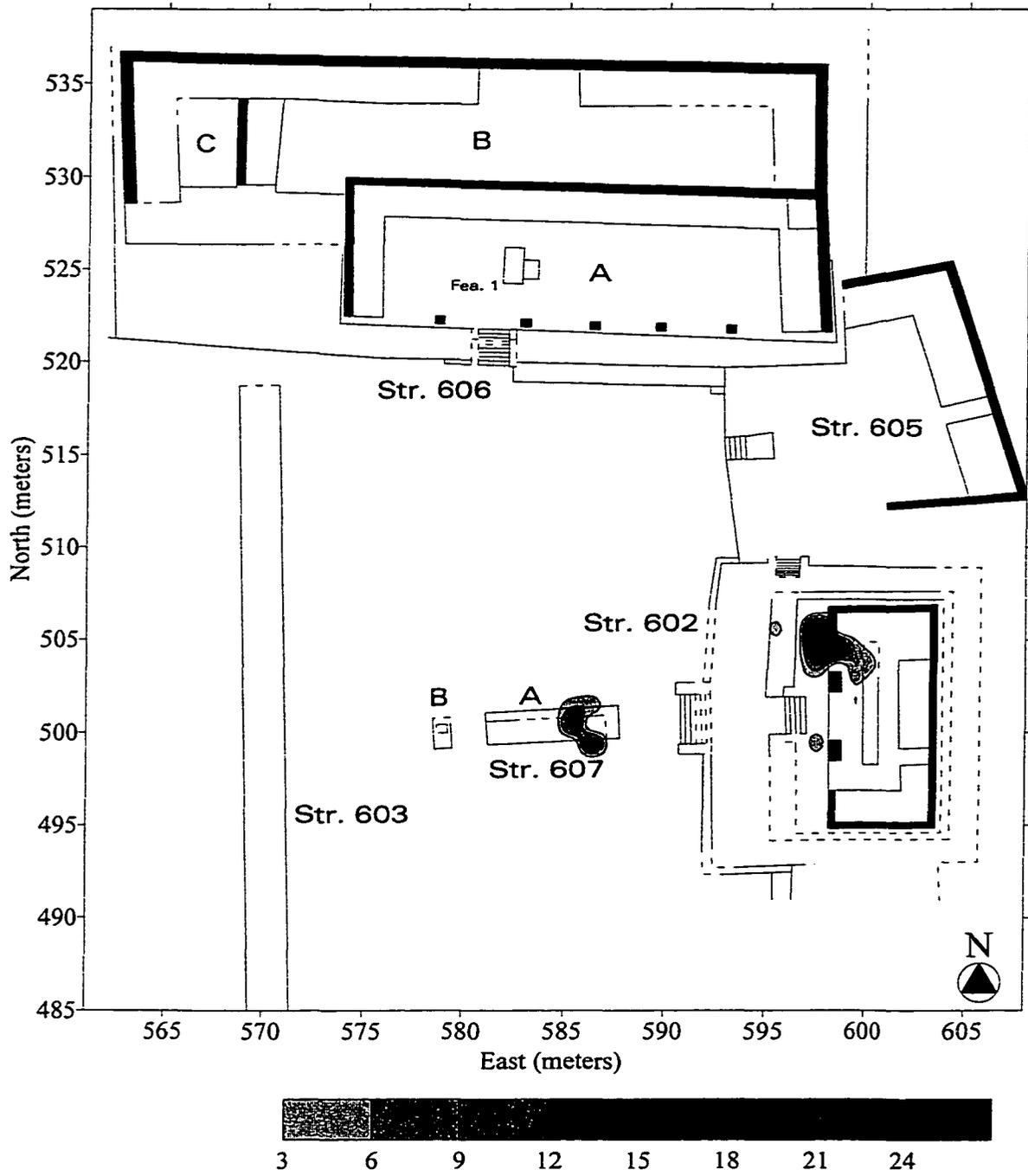


Figure 7-17. Zacpetén, Group A, Patojo Modeled Var. Moza.

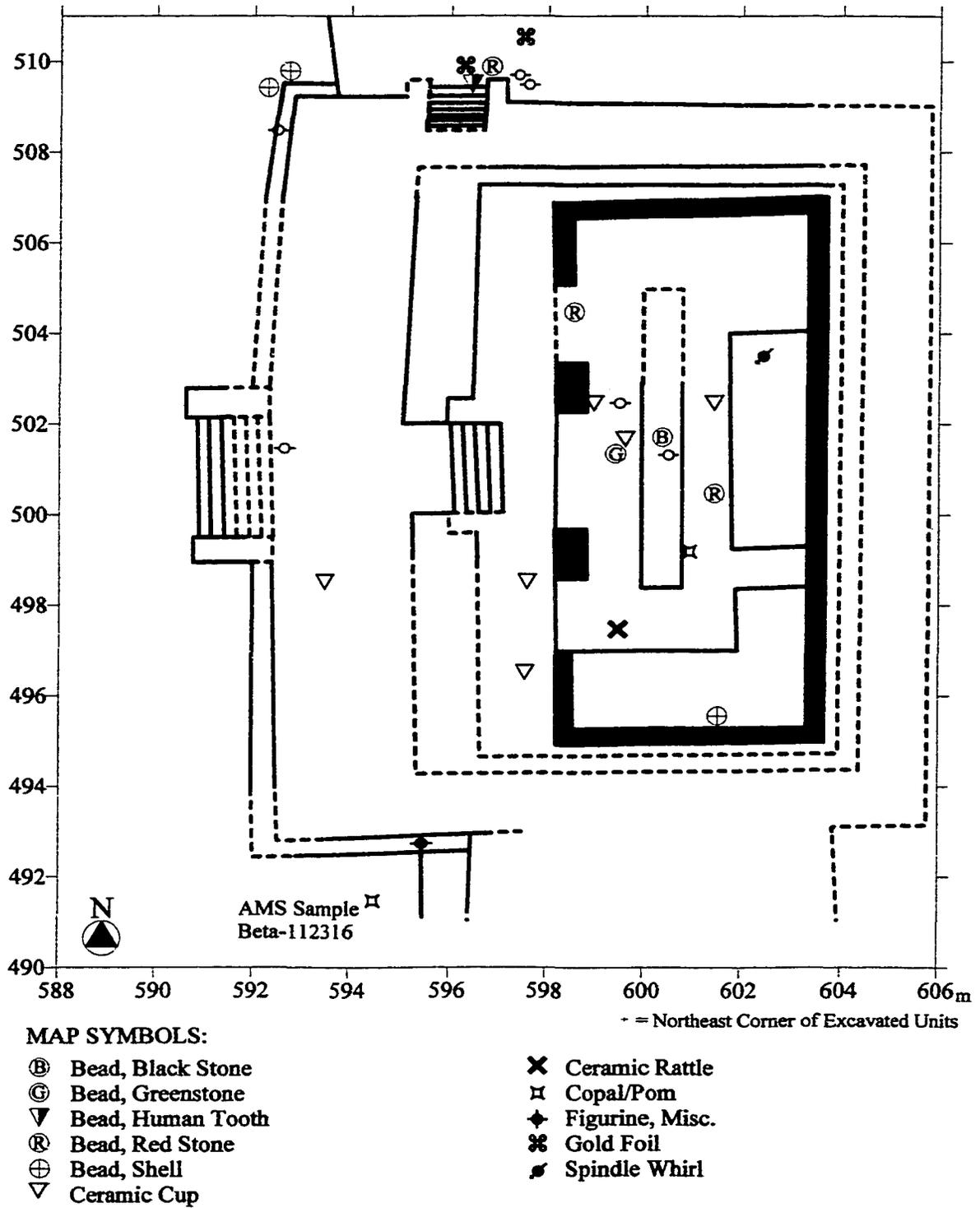
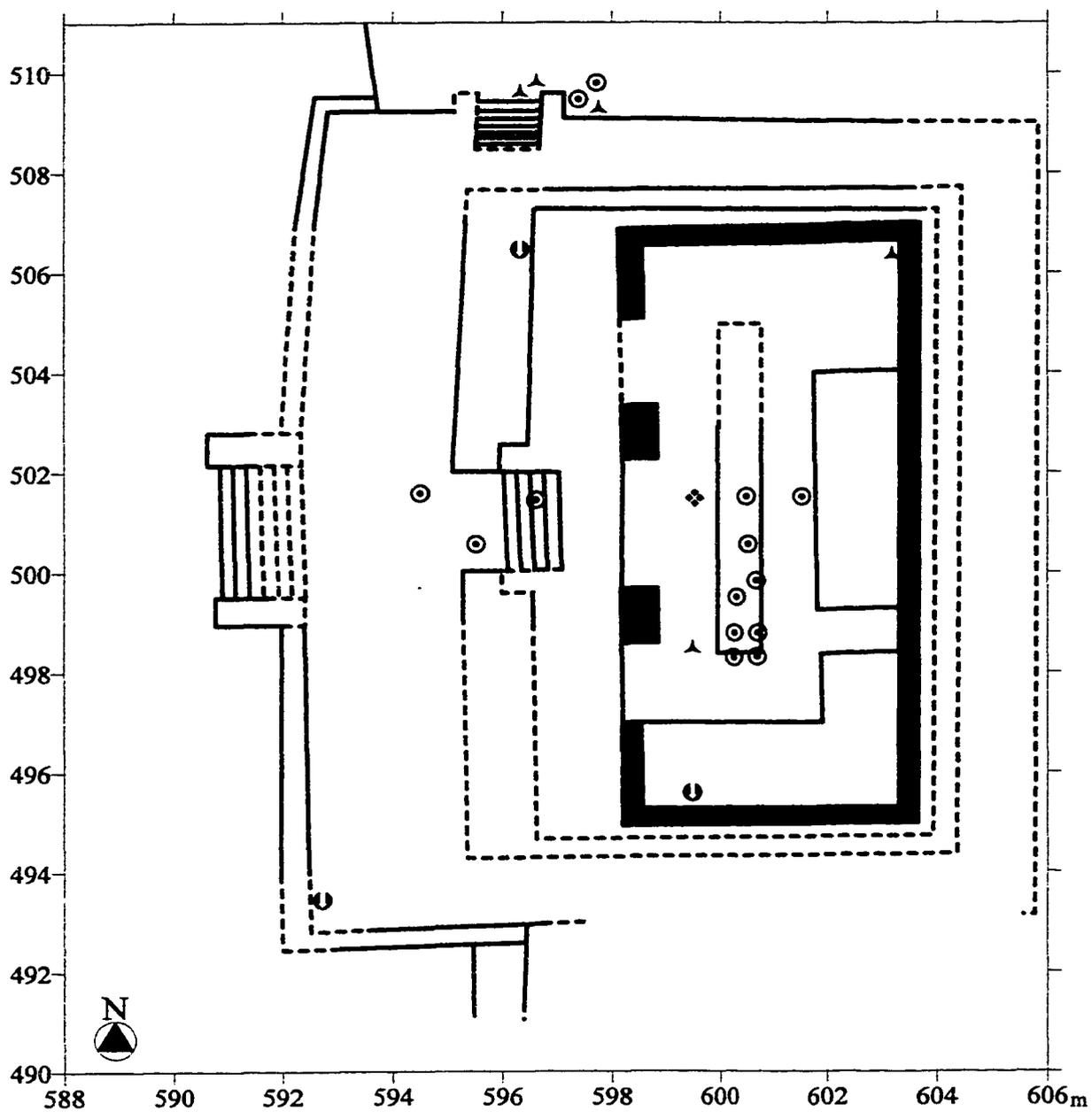


Figure 7-18. Zacpetén, Str. 602, Miscellaneous Uncommon Artifacts.



**MAP SYMBOLS:**

- ◆ Bone, Worked
- ⊙ Shell Marine
- ▲ Shell, Worked
- ⊕ Teeth, Human

Figure 7-19. Zacpetén, Str. 602, Uncommon Shell and Bone Artifacts.

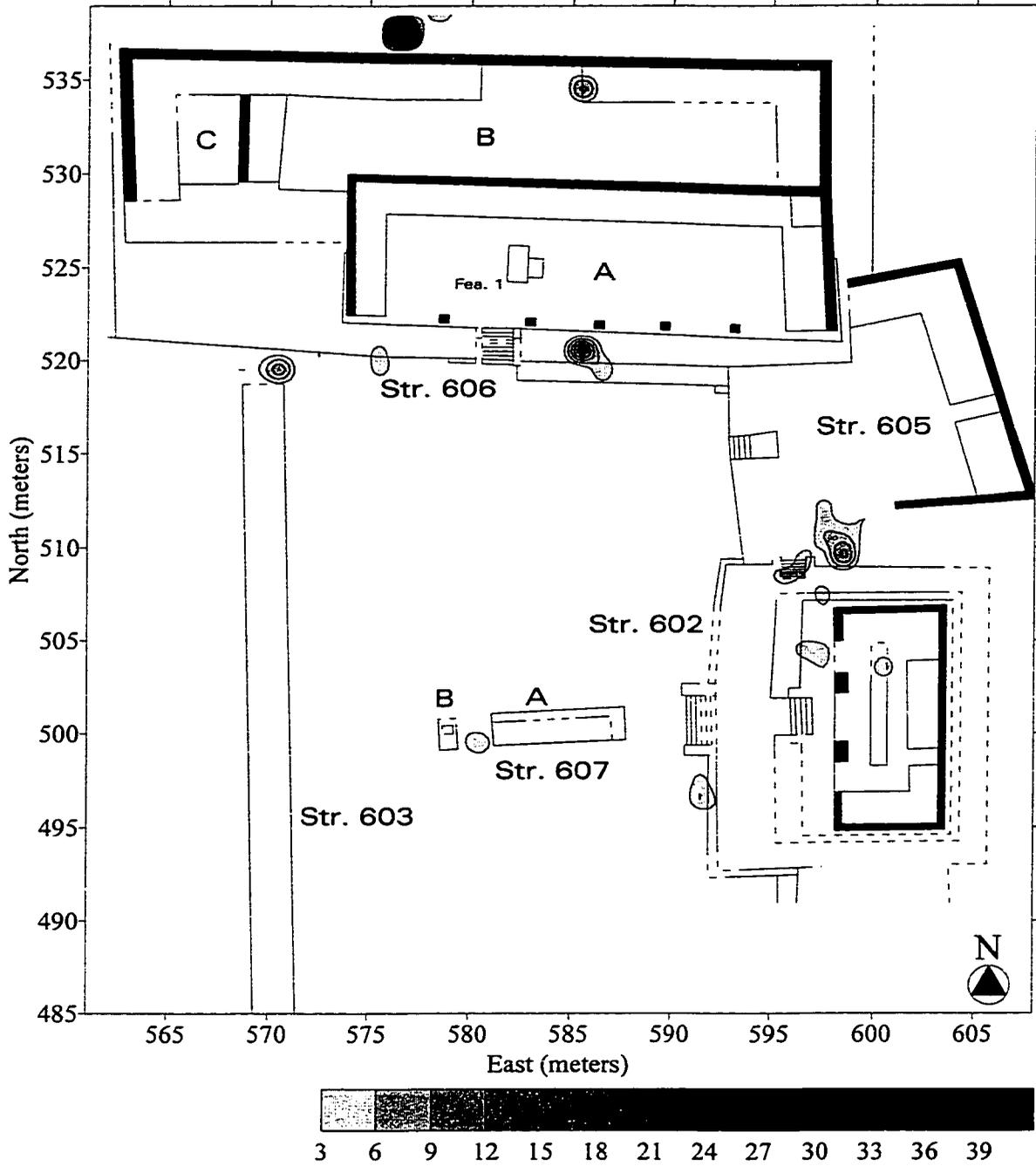


Figure 7-20. Zacpetén, Northeast Portion of Group A, Non-Image Censers.

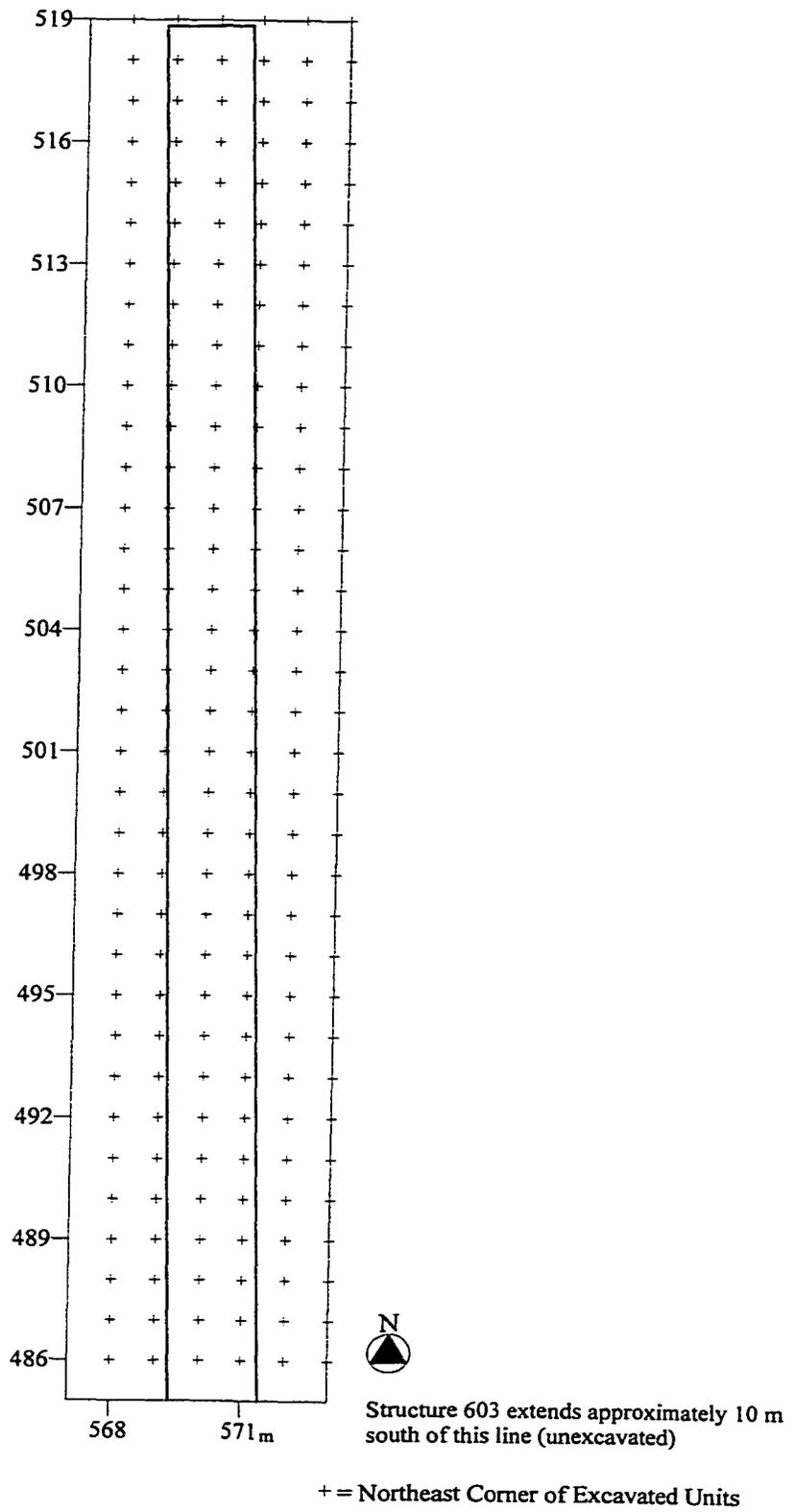


Figure 7-21. Zacpetén, Str. 603, Plan.

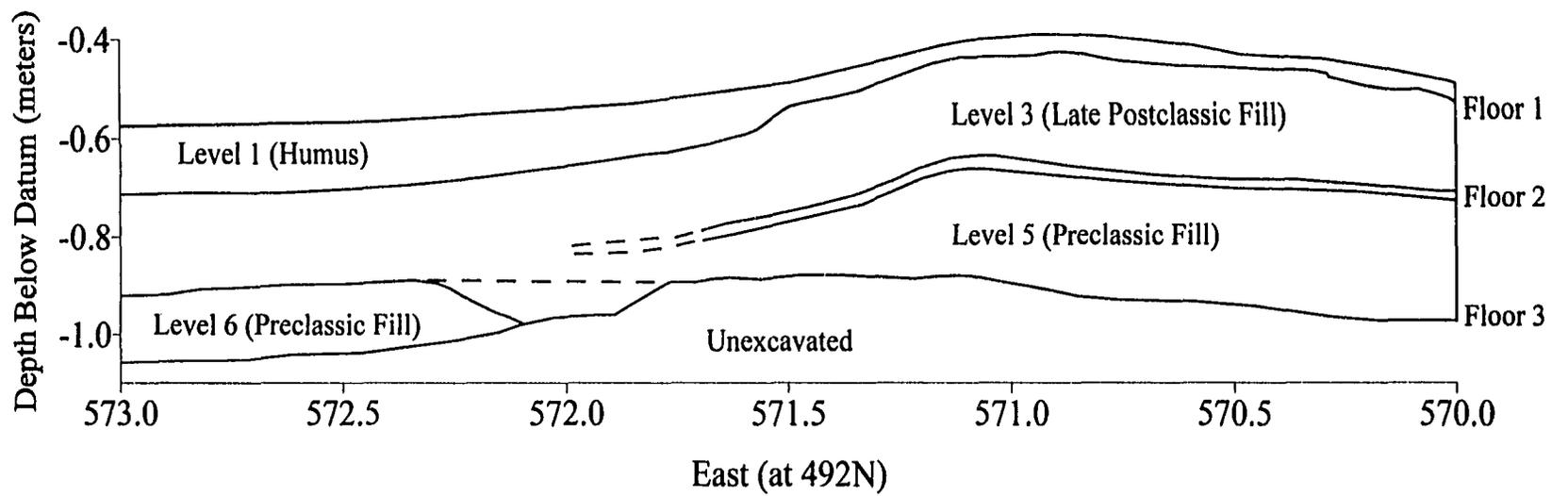


Figure 7-22. Zacpetén, Str. 603, Excavation Trench, South Profile.

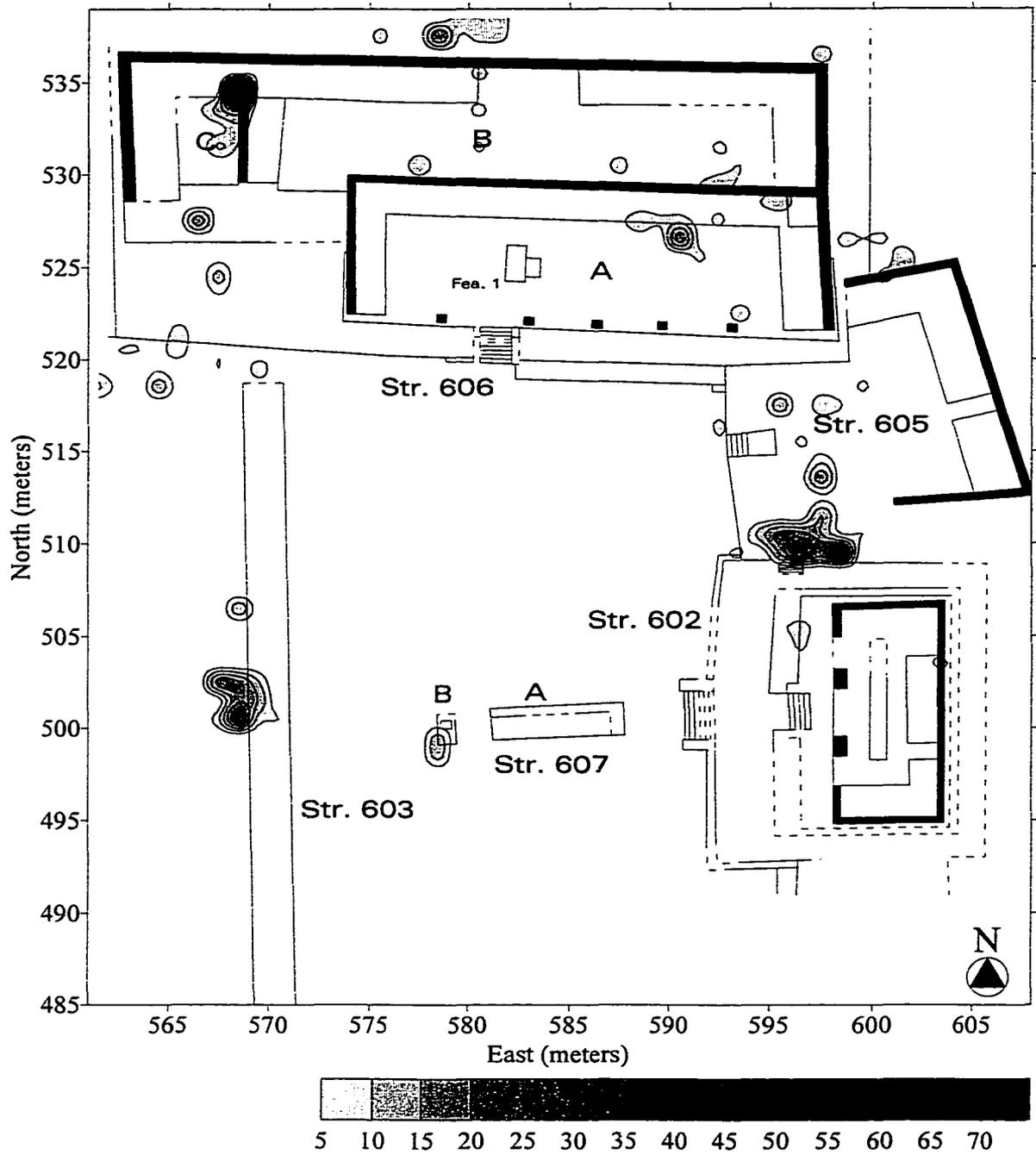


Figure 7-23. Zacpetén, Northeast Portion of Group A, Miscellaneous Bone.

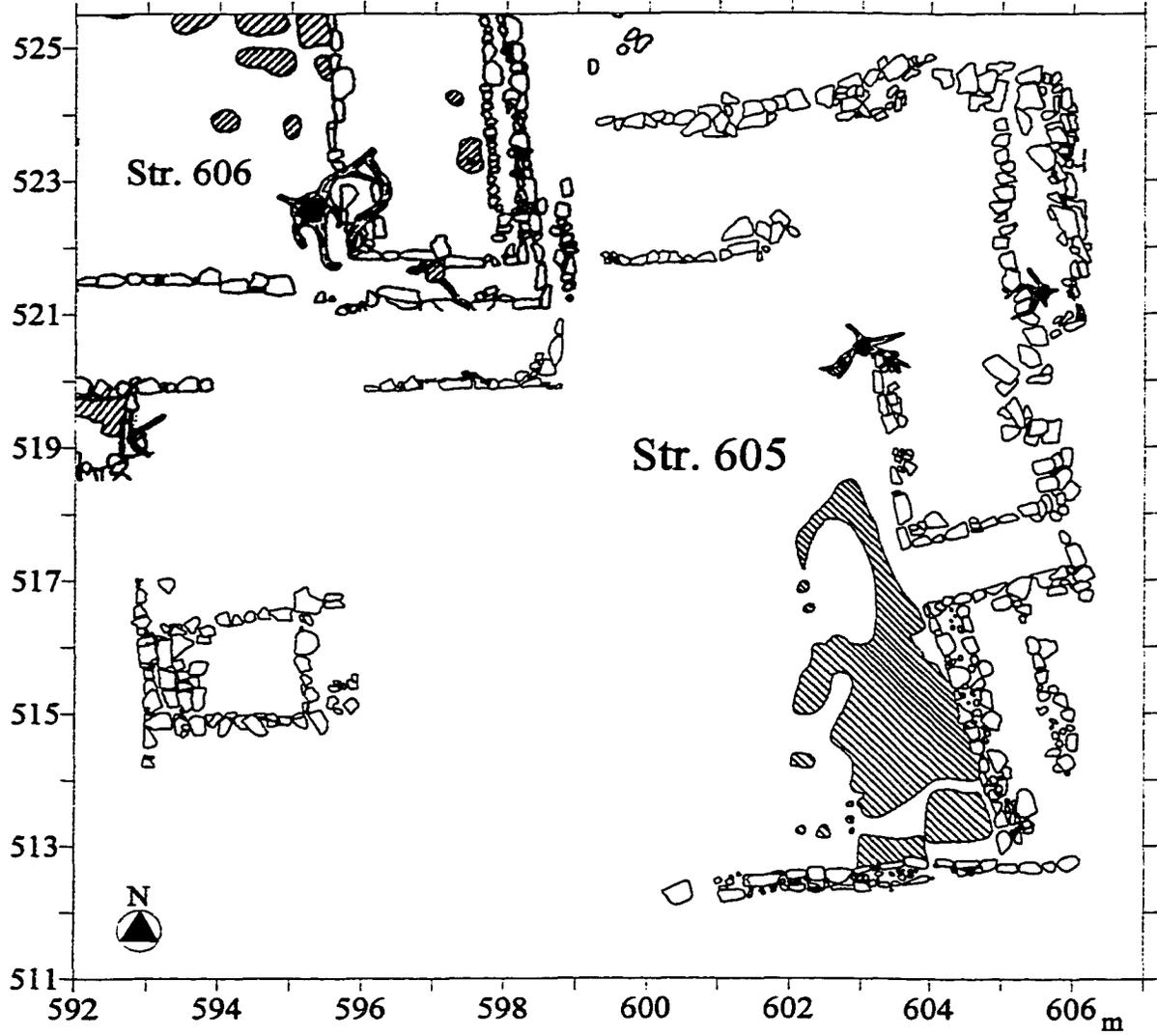


Figure 7-24. Zacpetén, Str. 605, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

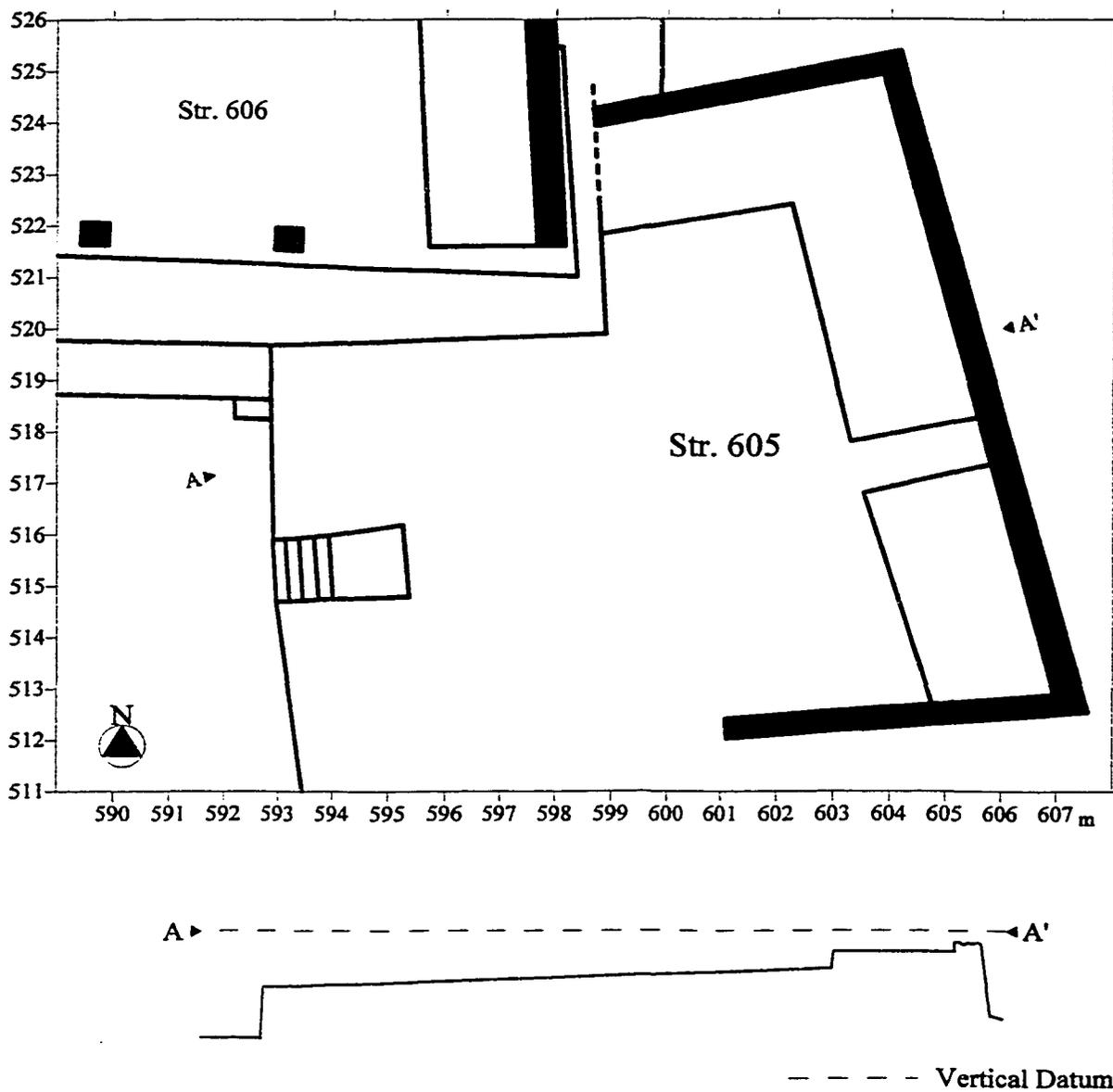


Figure 7-25. Zacpetén, Str. 605, Plan and Cross-Sections.

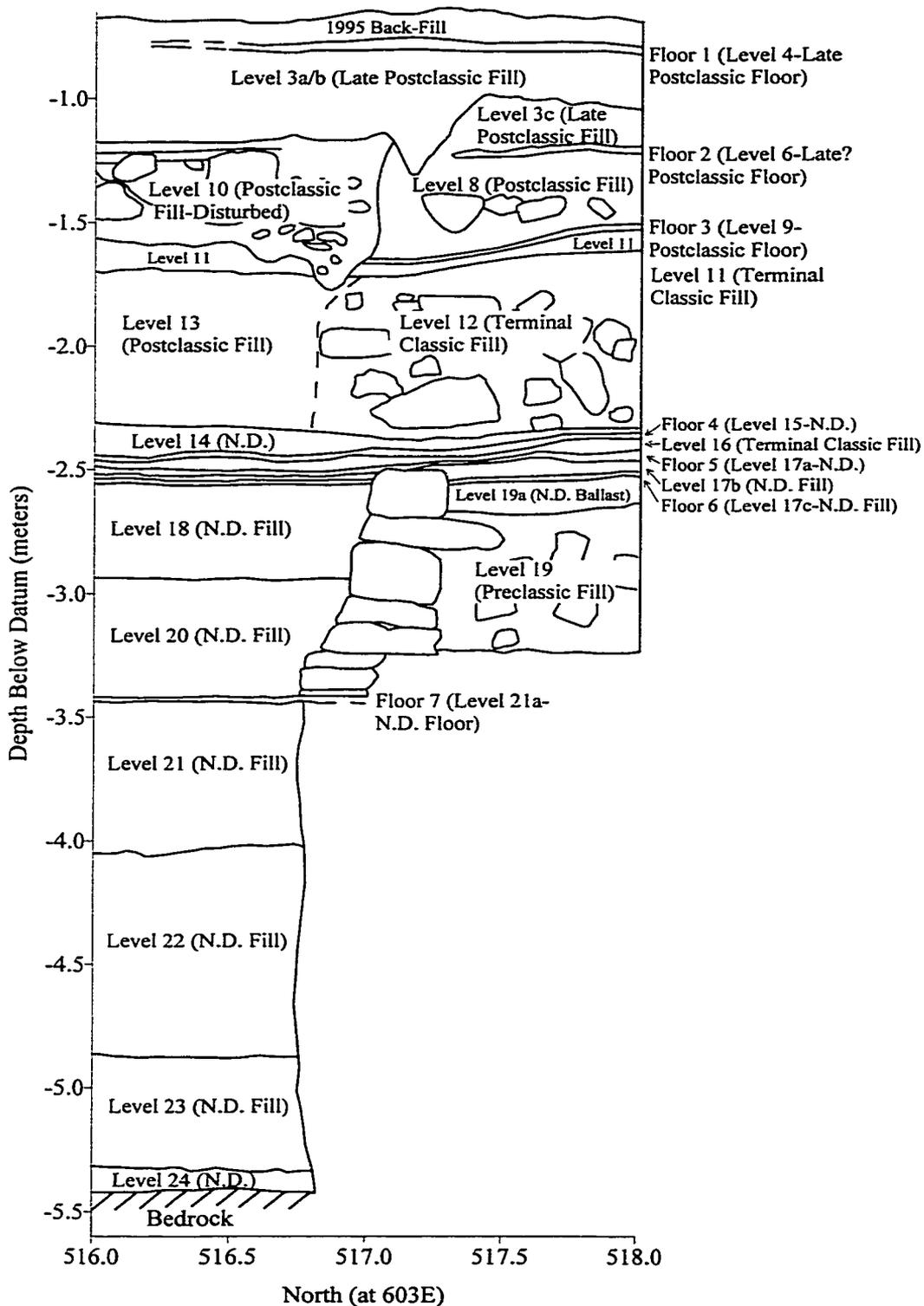


Figure 7-26. Zacpetén, Str. 605, Test Unit 518, 603, East Profile.

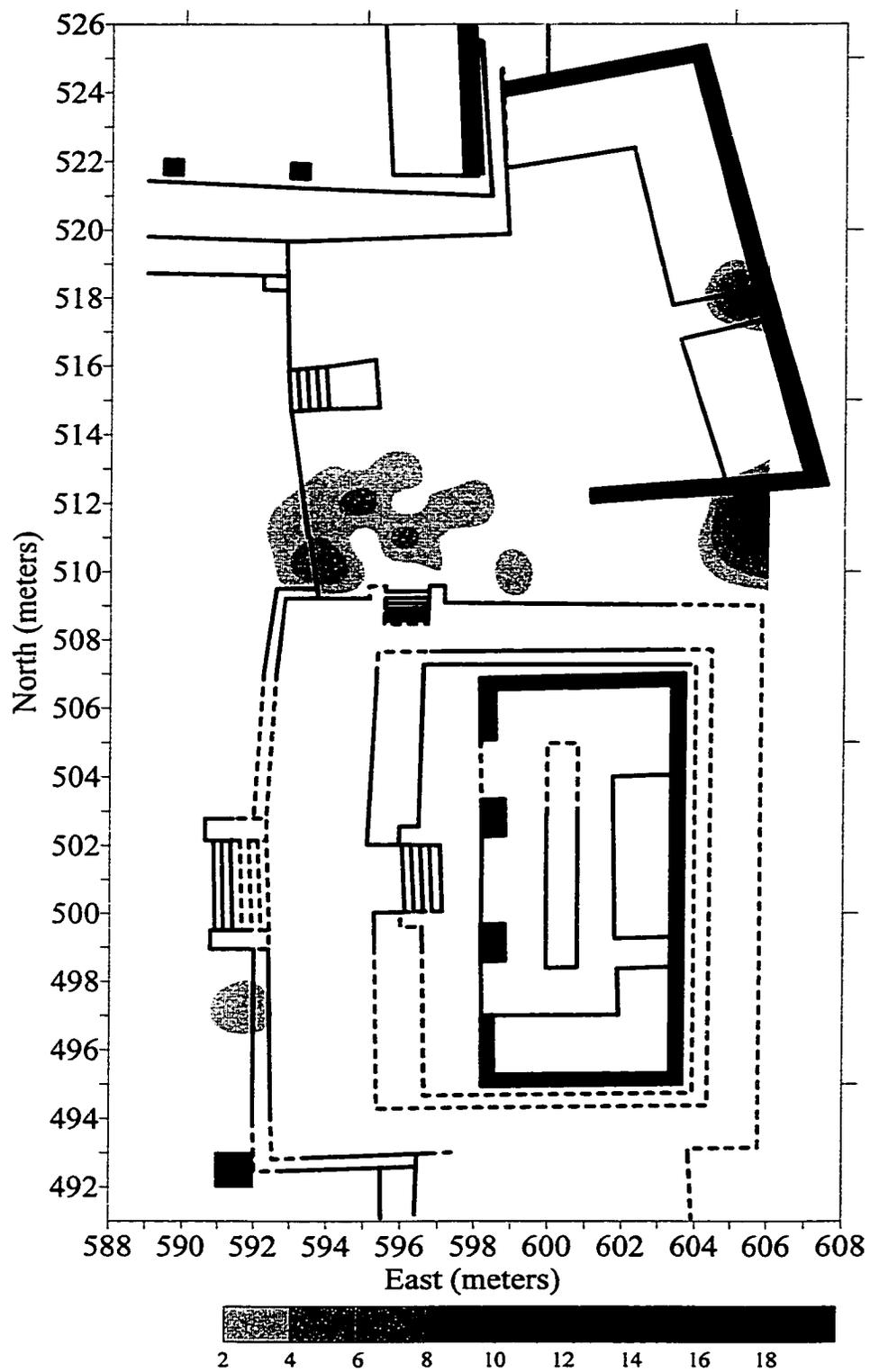


Figure 7-27. Zacpetén, Strs. 602 and 605, Kulut Modeled.

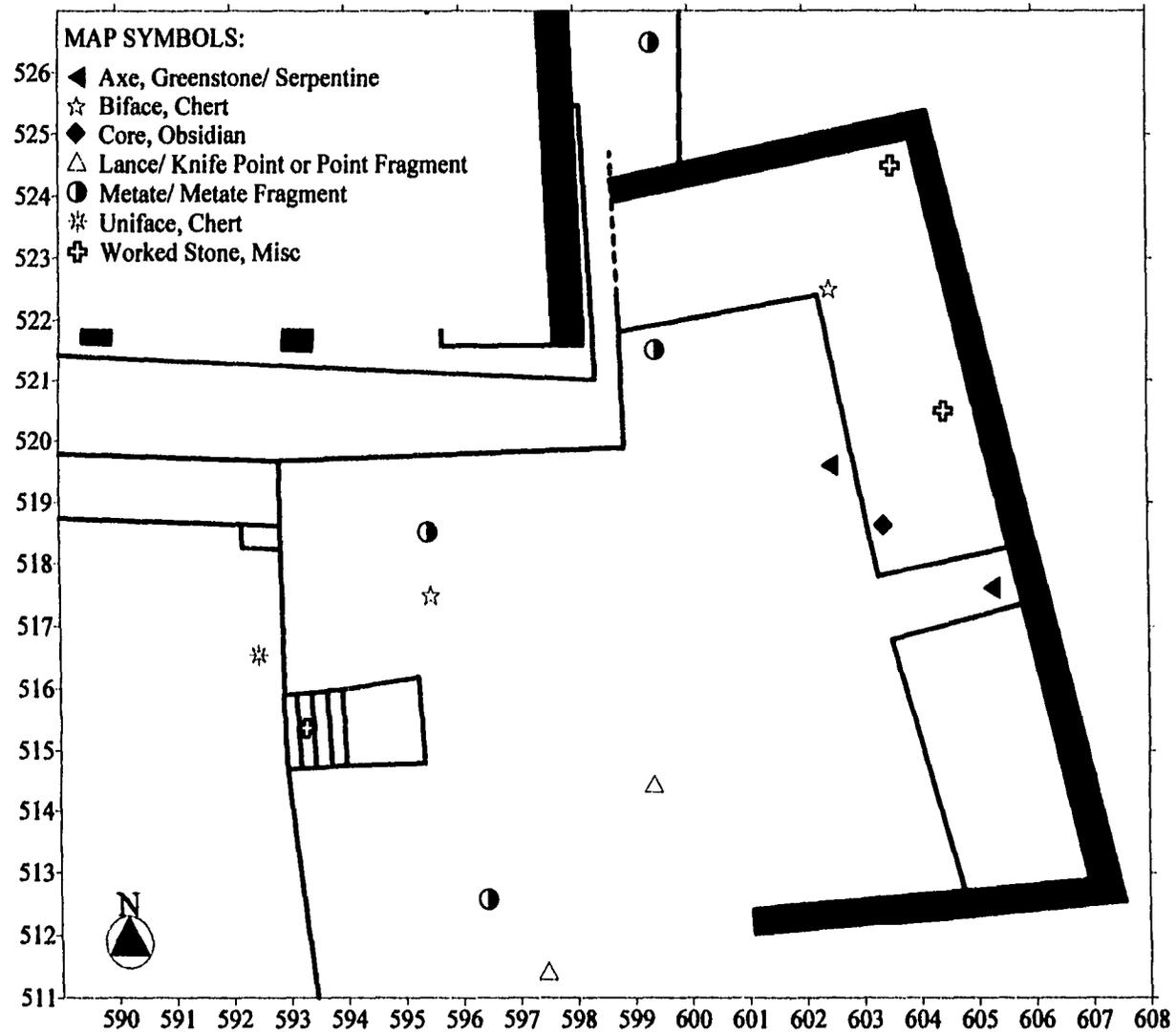


Figure 7-28. Zacpetén, Str. 605, Uncommon Lithic Artifacts.

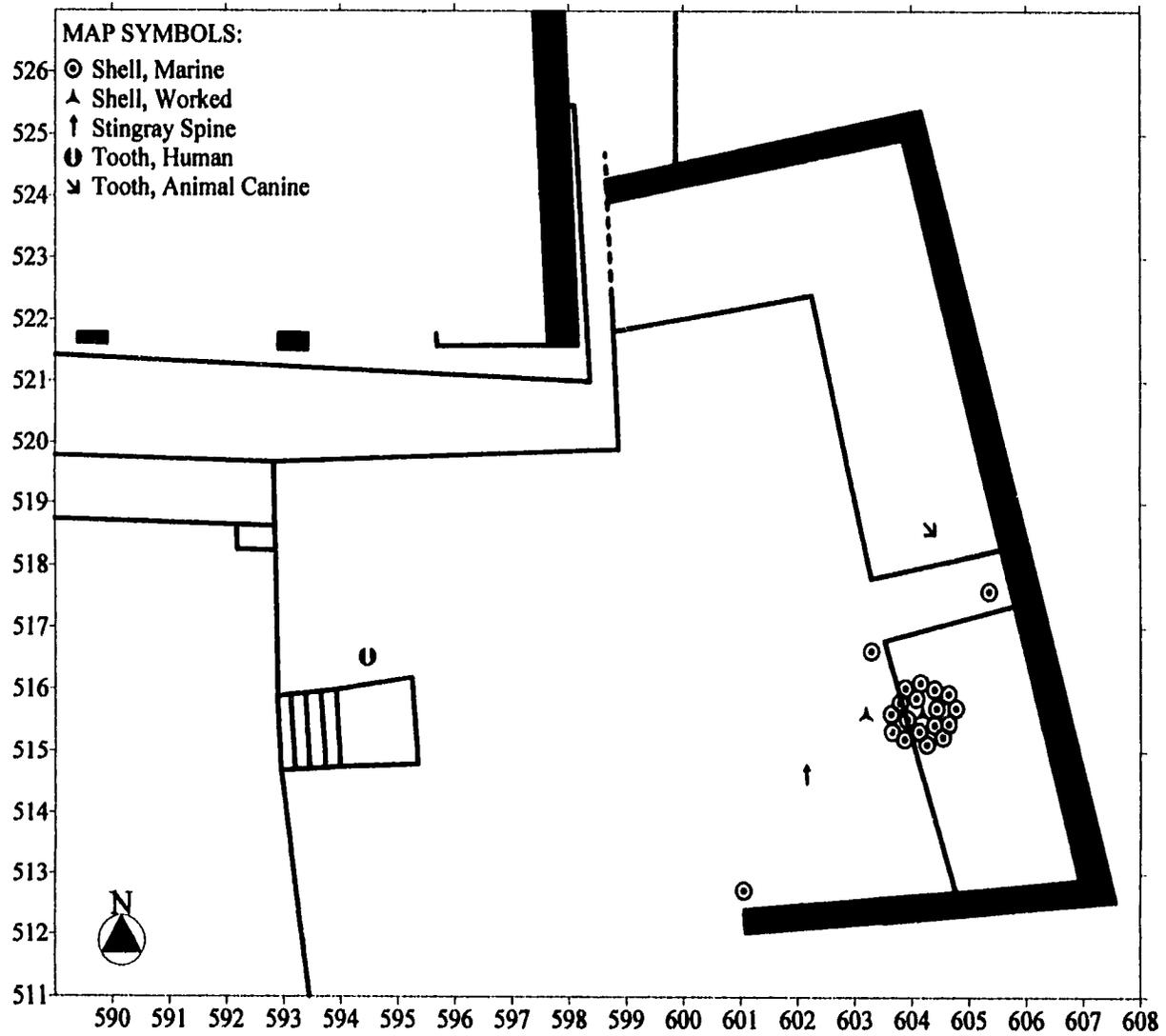


Figure 7-29. Zacpetén, Str. 605, Uncommon Shell and Bone Artifacts.

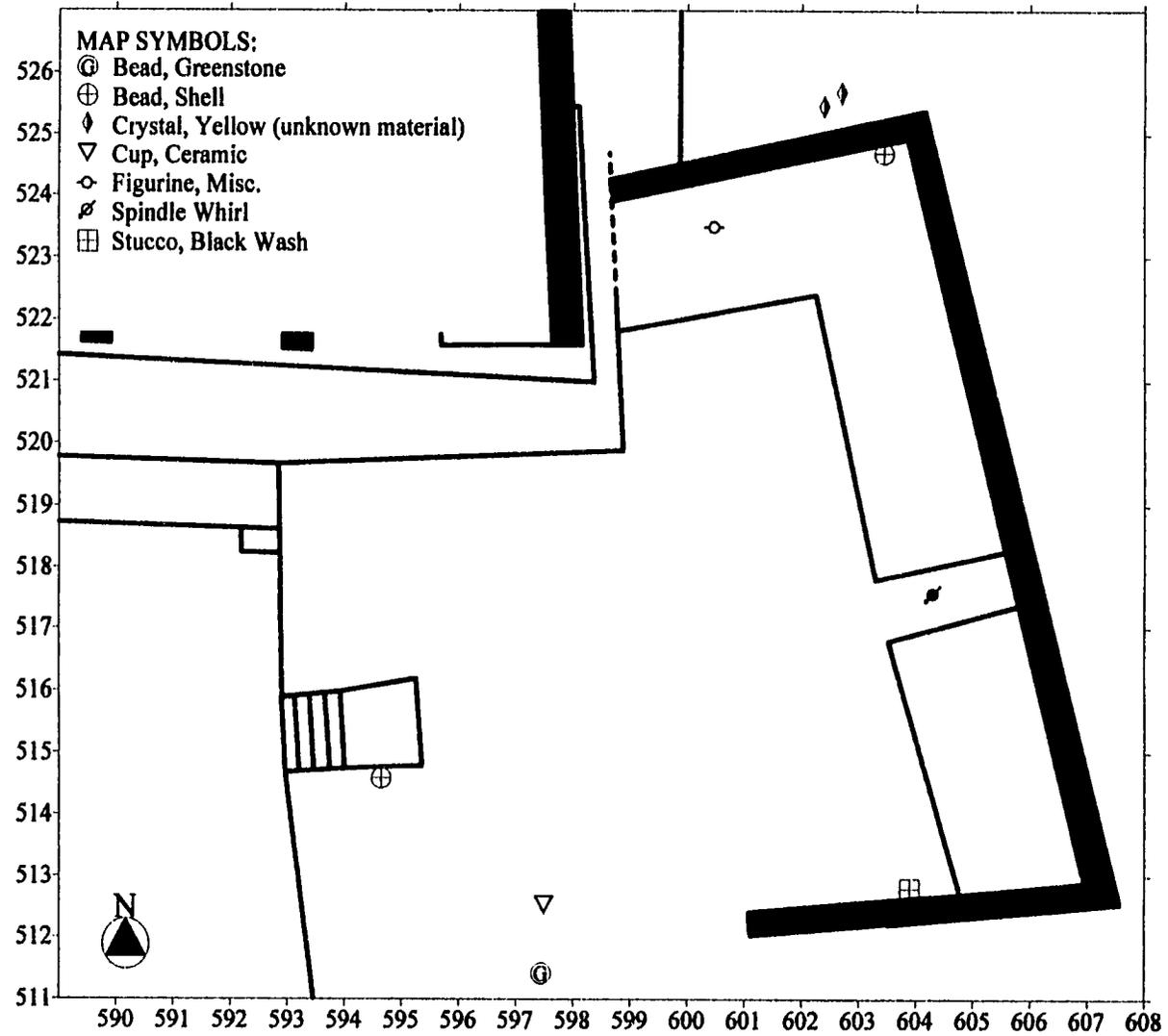


Figure 7-30. Zacpetén, Str. 605, Miscellaneous Uncommon Artifacts.

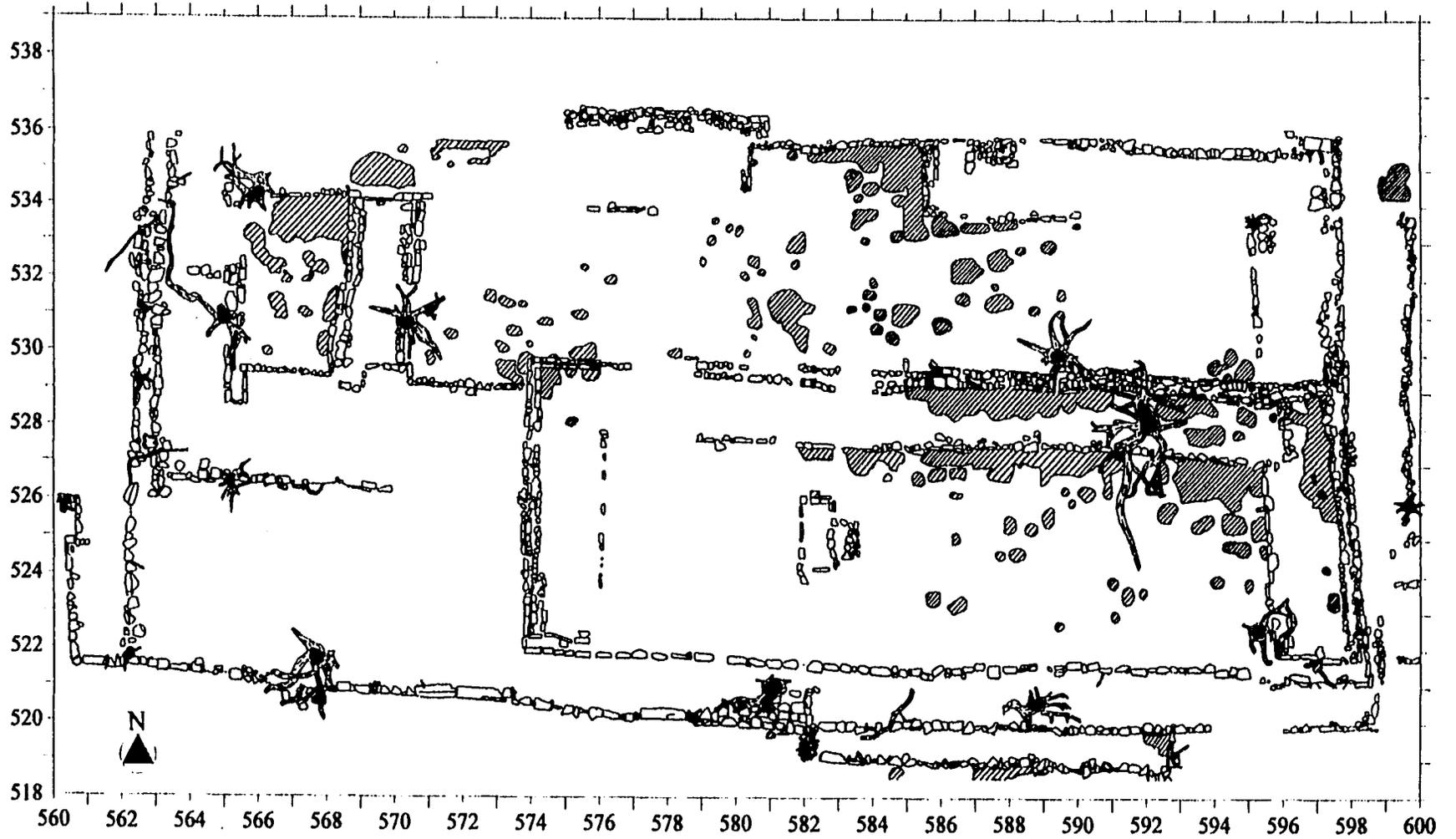


Figure 7-31. Zacpetén, Str. 606, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

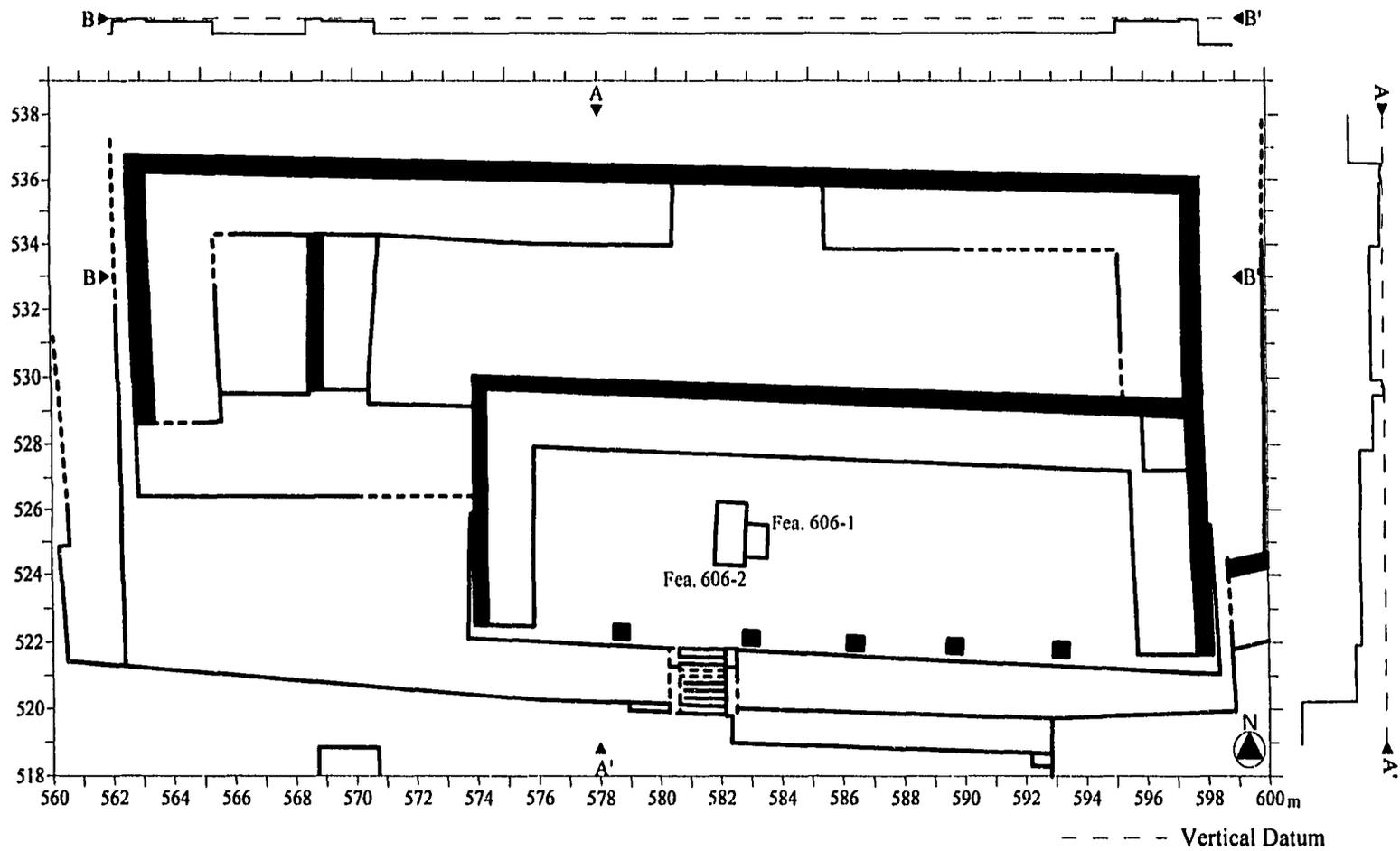
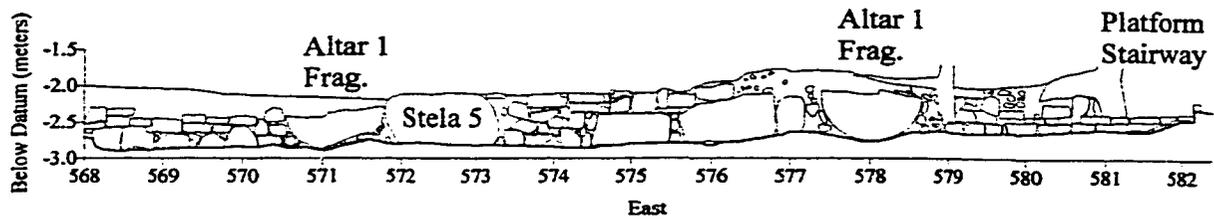
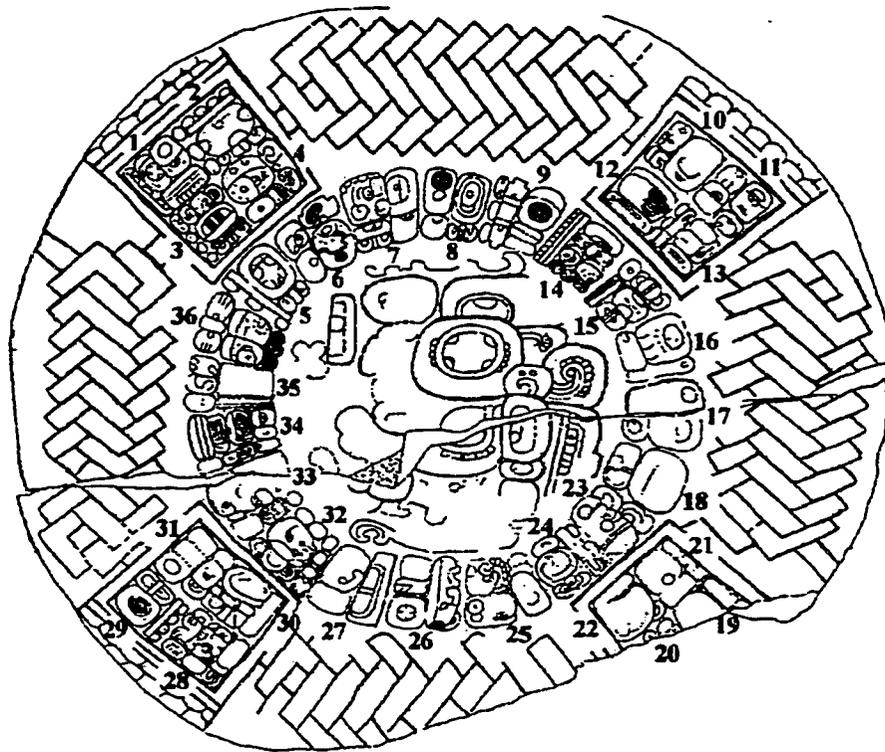


Figure 7-32. Zacpetén, Str. 606, Plan and Cross-Sections.



A. Altar 1 and Stela 3 In Situ in the South Wall of the Lower Terrace of Structure 606.



B. Preliminary Drawing of Altar 1.

Figure 7-33. Zacpetén, Str. 606, Altar 1 and Stela 3 in the Platform Wall.

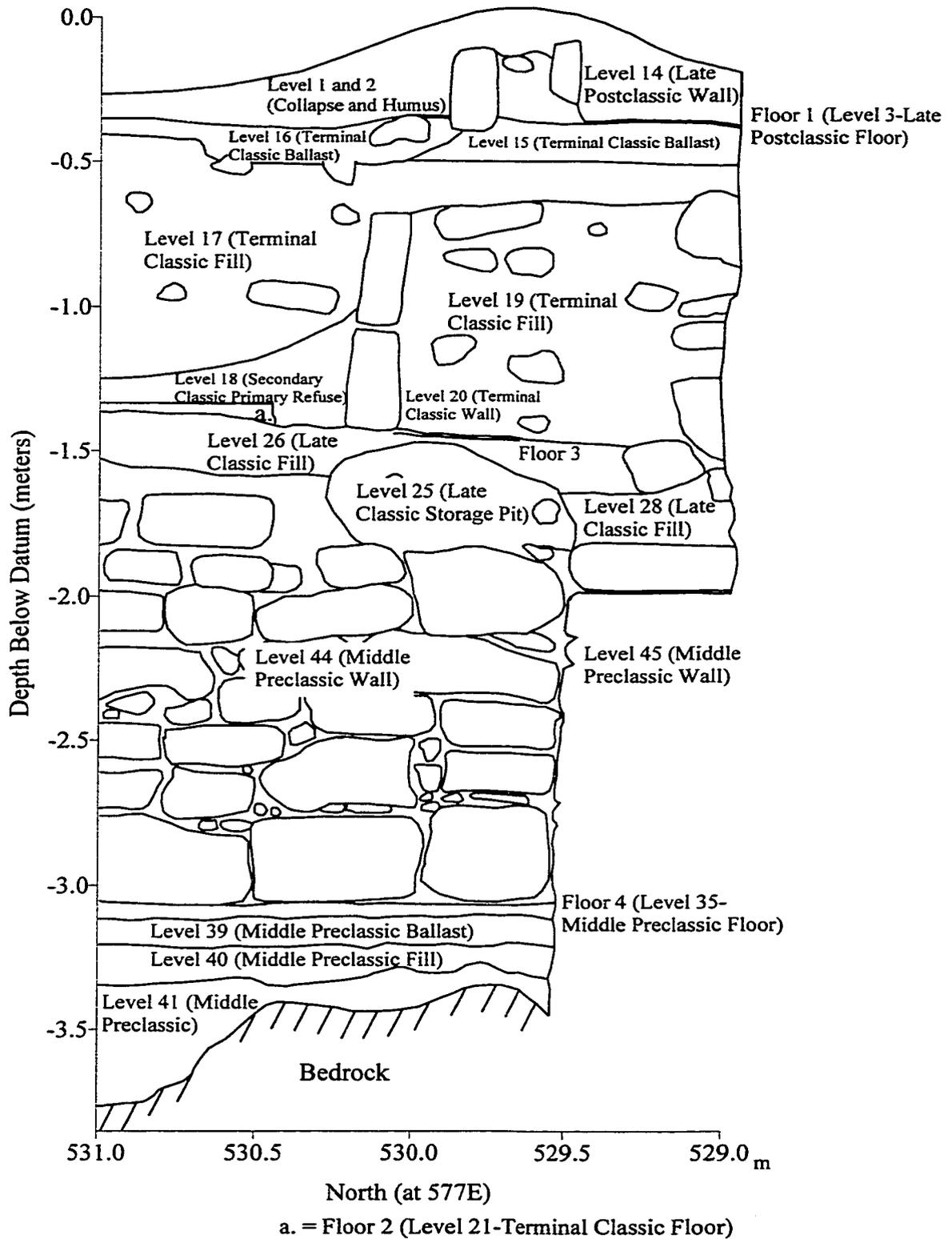


Figure 7-34. Zacpetén, Str. 606, Test Unit 531, 577, East Profile.

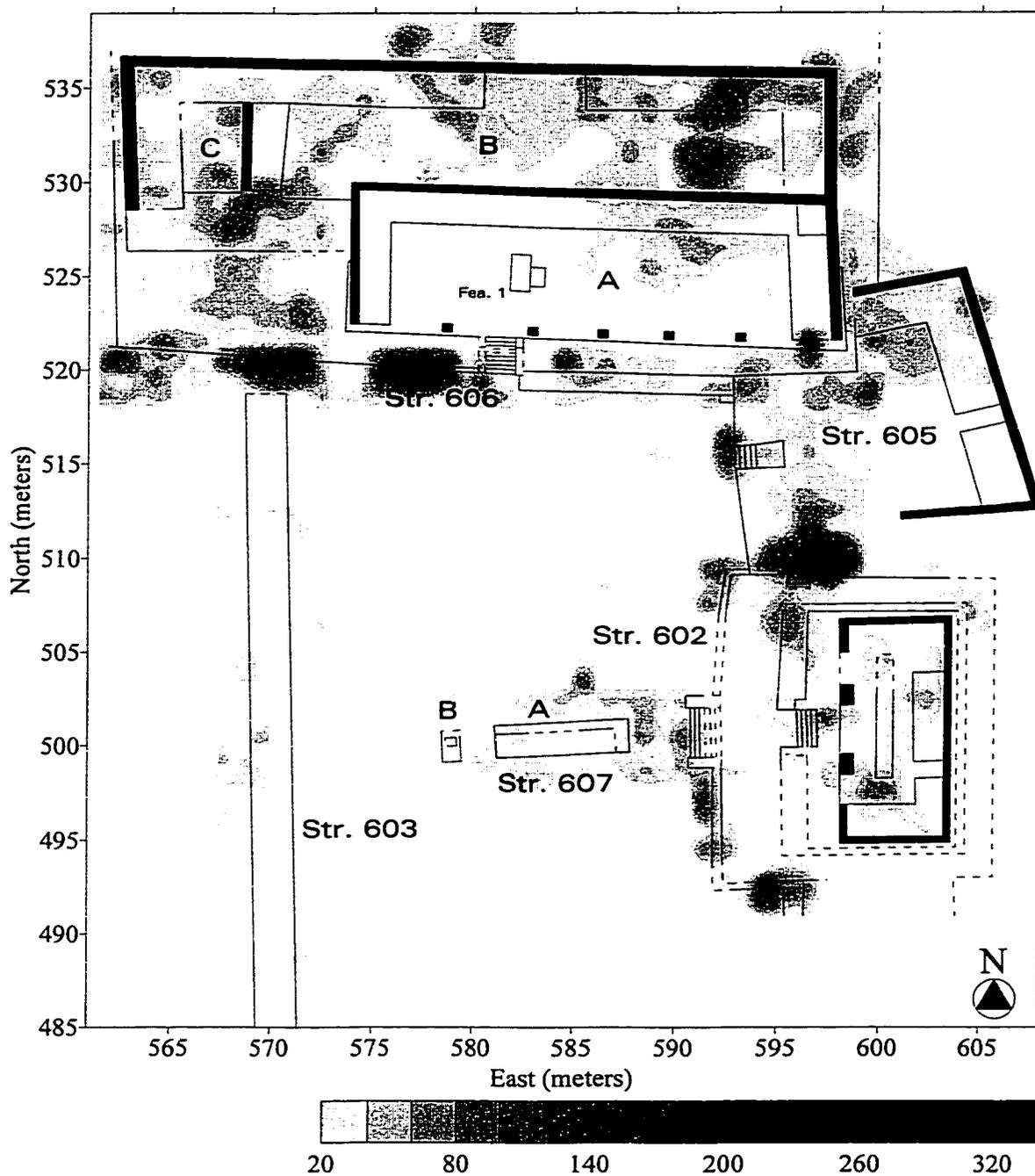


Figure 7-35. Zacpetén, Str. 606, Miscellaneous Ceramics.

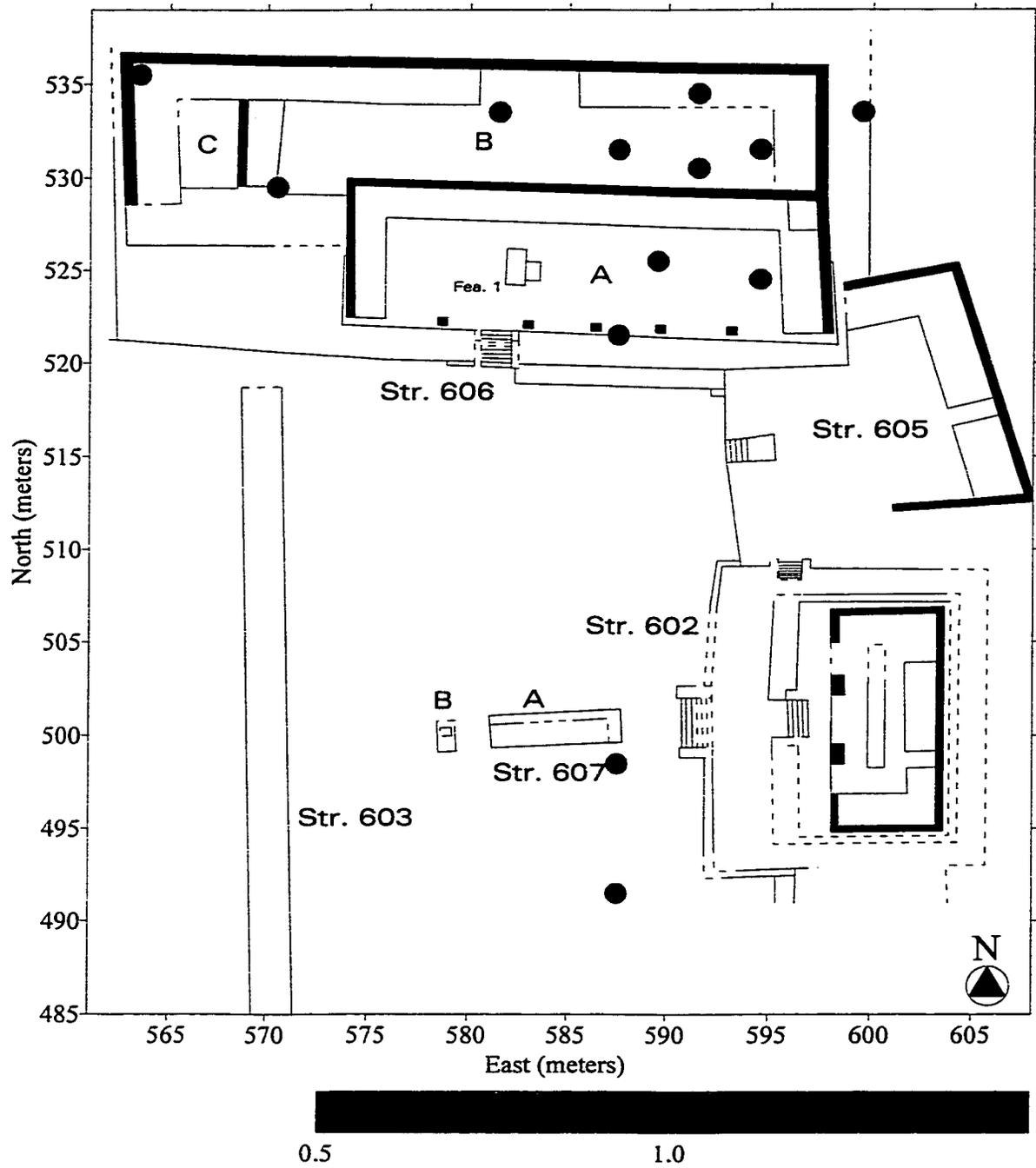


Figure 7-36. Zacpetén, Northeast Portion of Group A, Quartz Crystals.

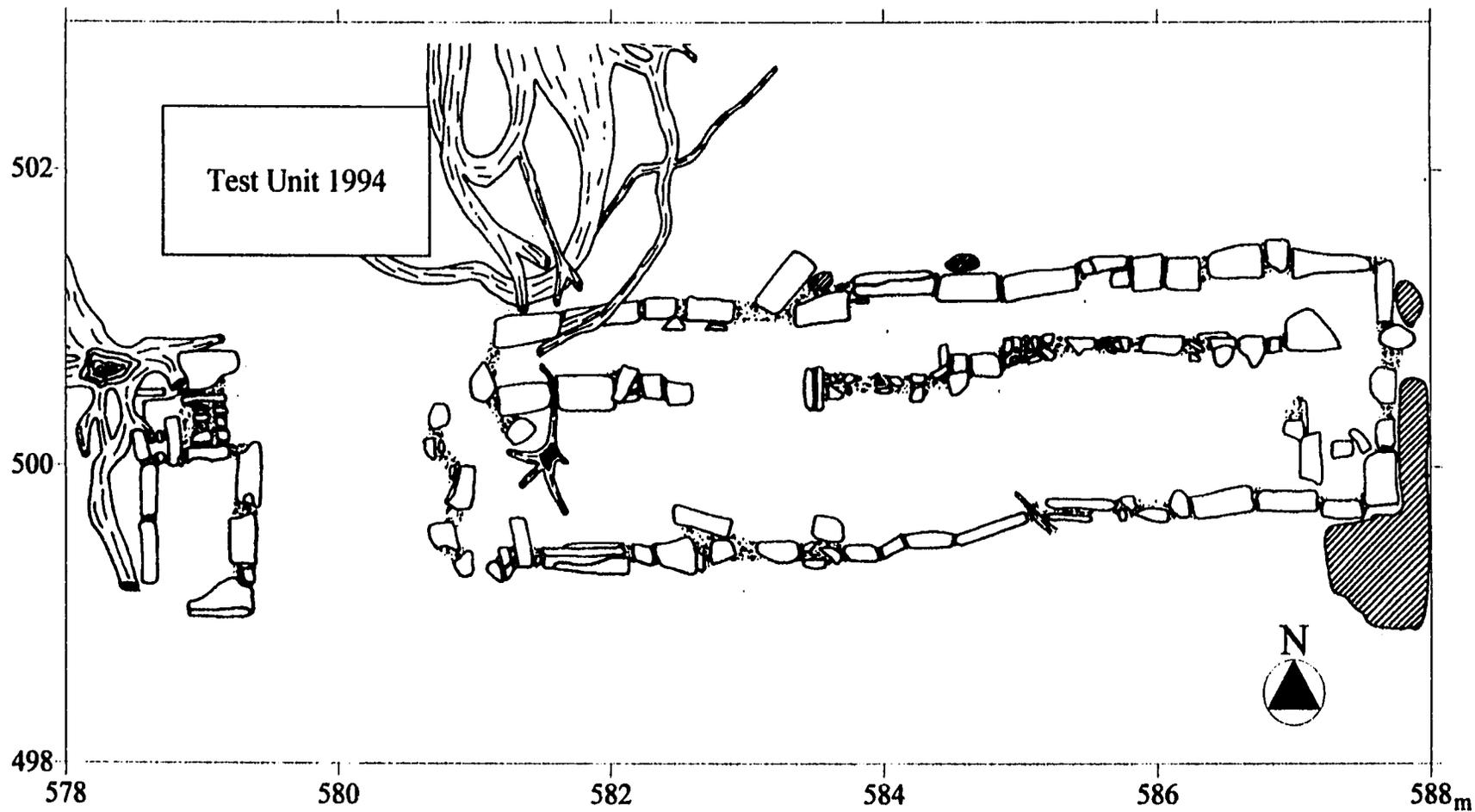


Figure 7-37. Zacpetén, Str. 607, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

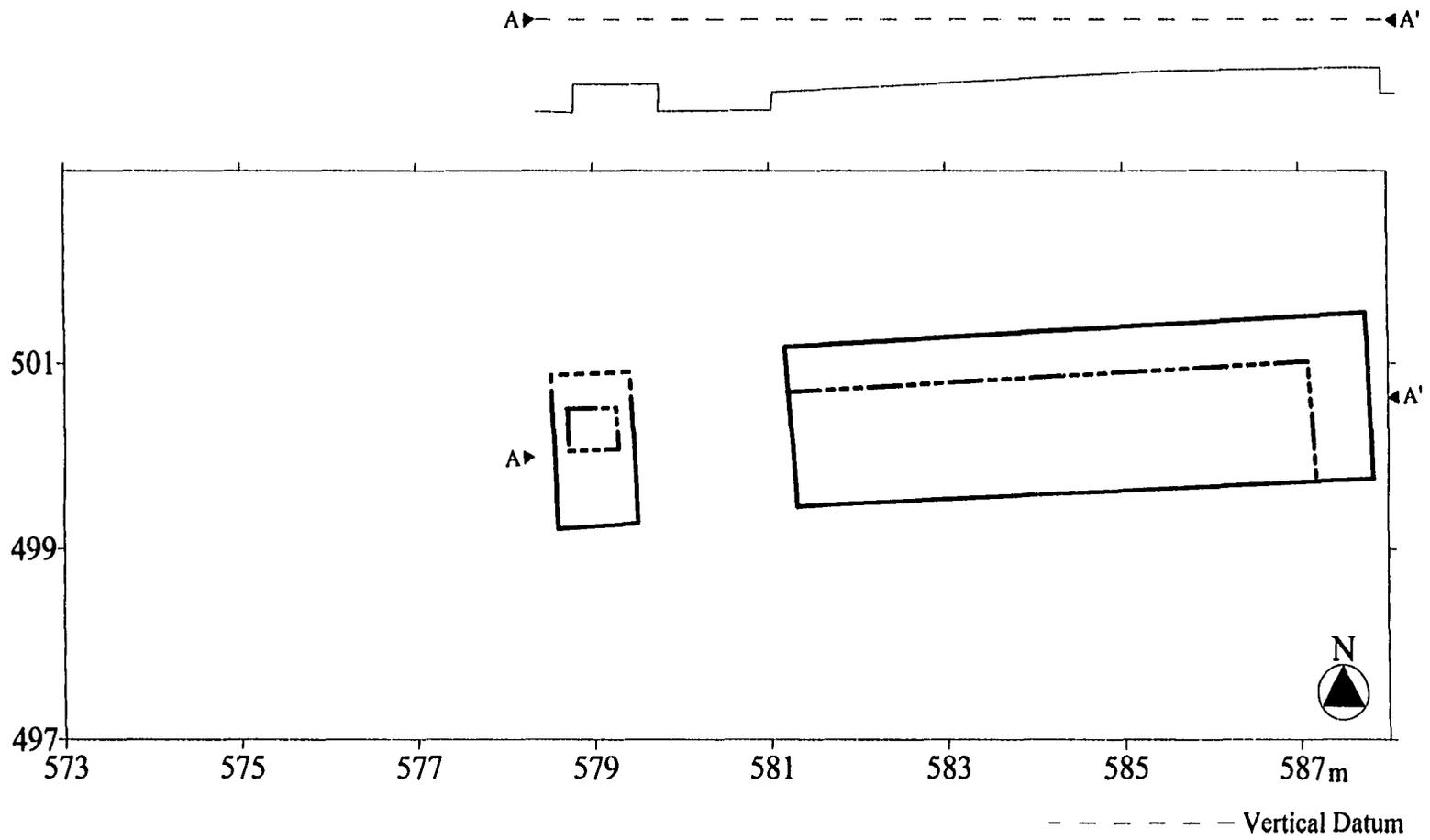


Figure 7-38. Zacpetén, Str. 607, Plan and Cross-Sections.

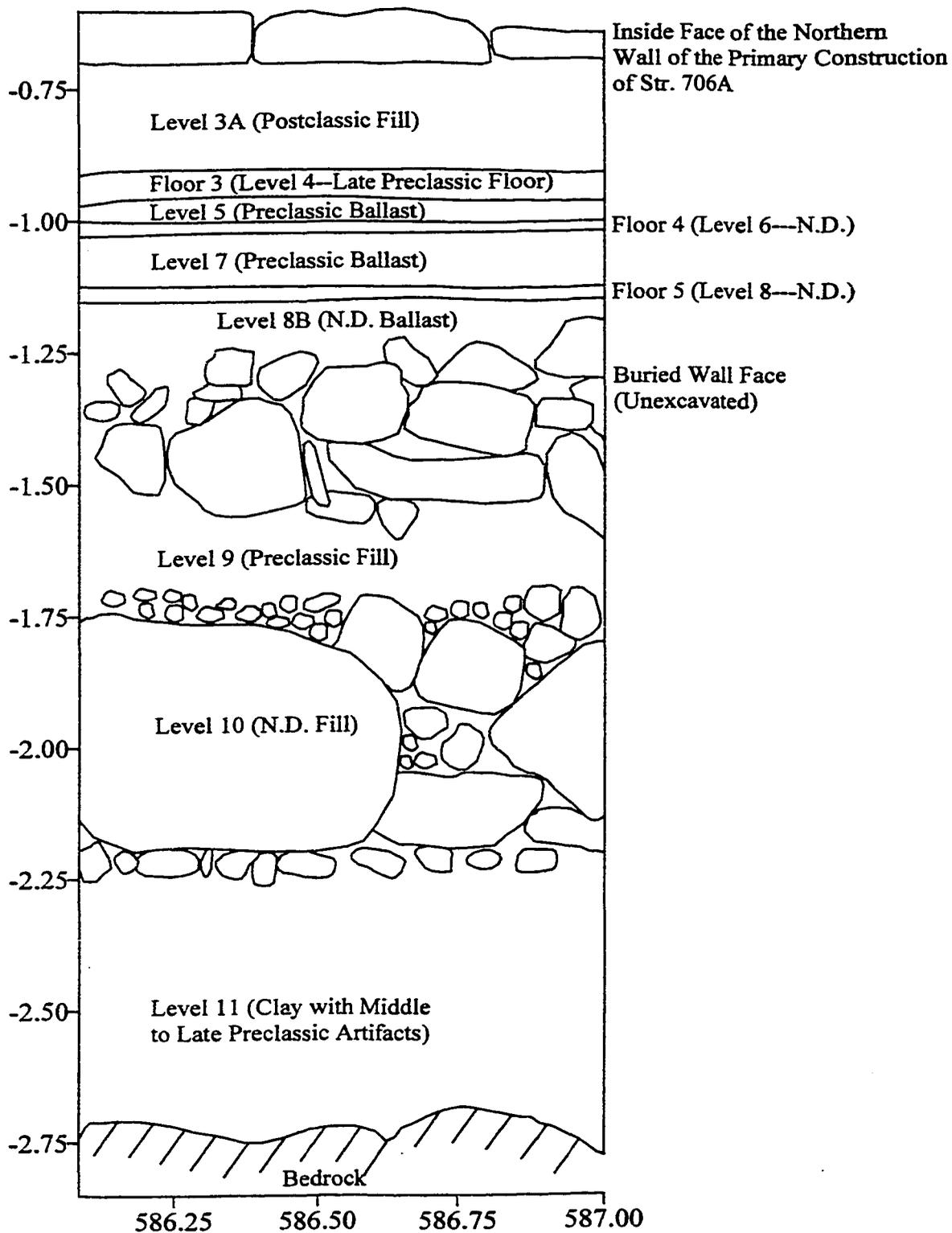
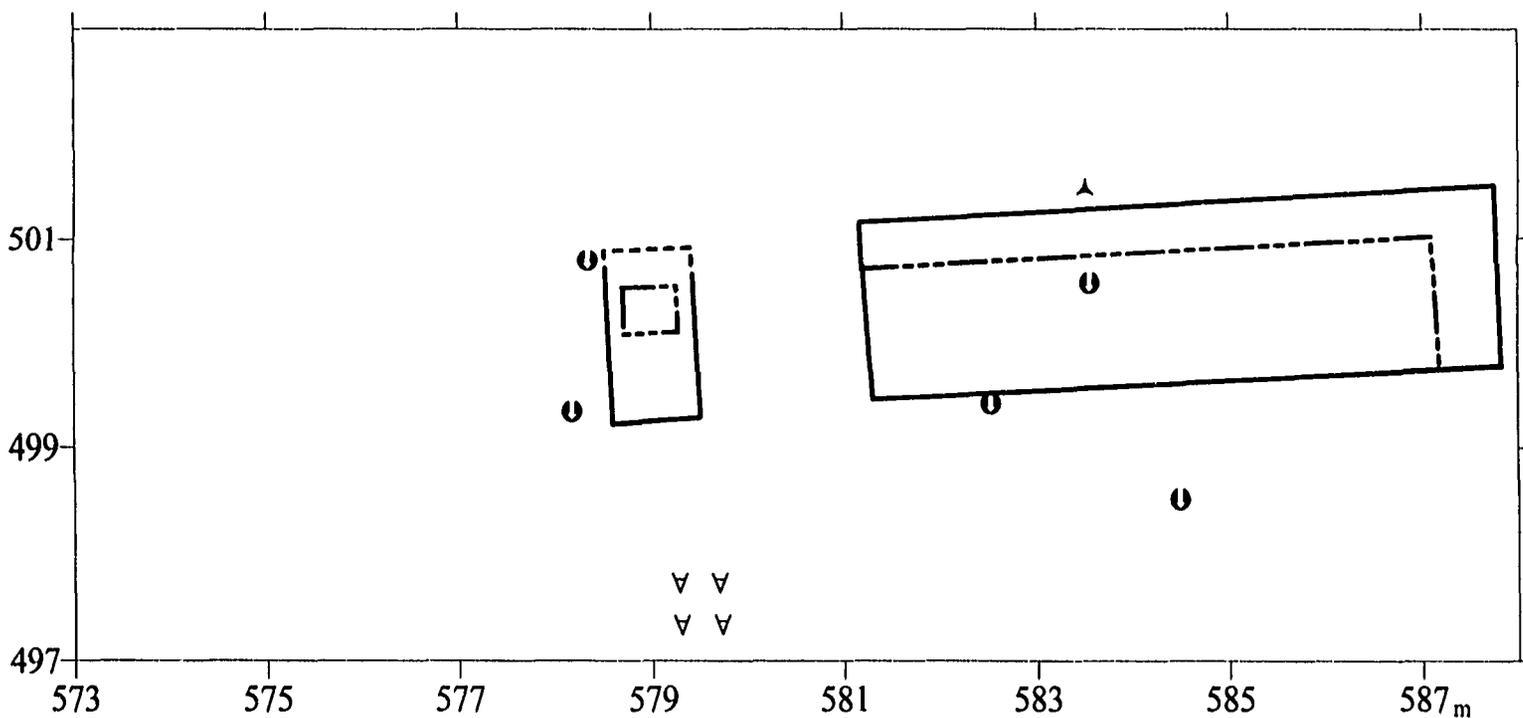


Figure 7-39. Zacpetén, Str. 607, Test Unit 501, 589, North Profile.



Zacpetén, Structure 607, Uncommon Bone and Shell Artifacts

MAP SYMBOLS:

- ∇ Bone, Human Cranial Fragments
- ▲ Shell, Worked
- Teeth, Human



Figure 7-40. Zacpetén, Str. 607, Uncommon Bone and Shell.

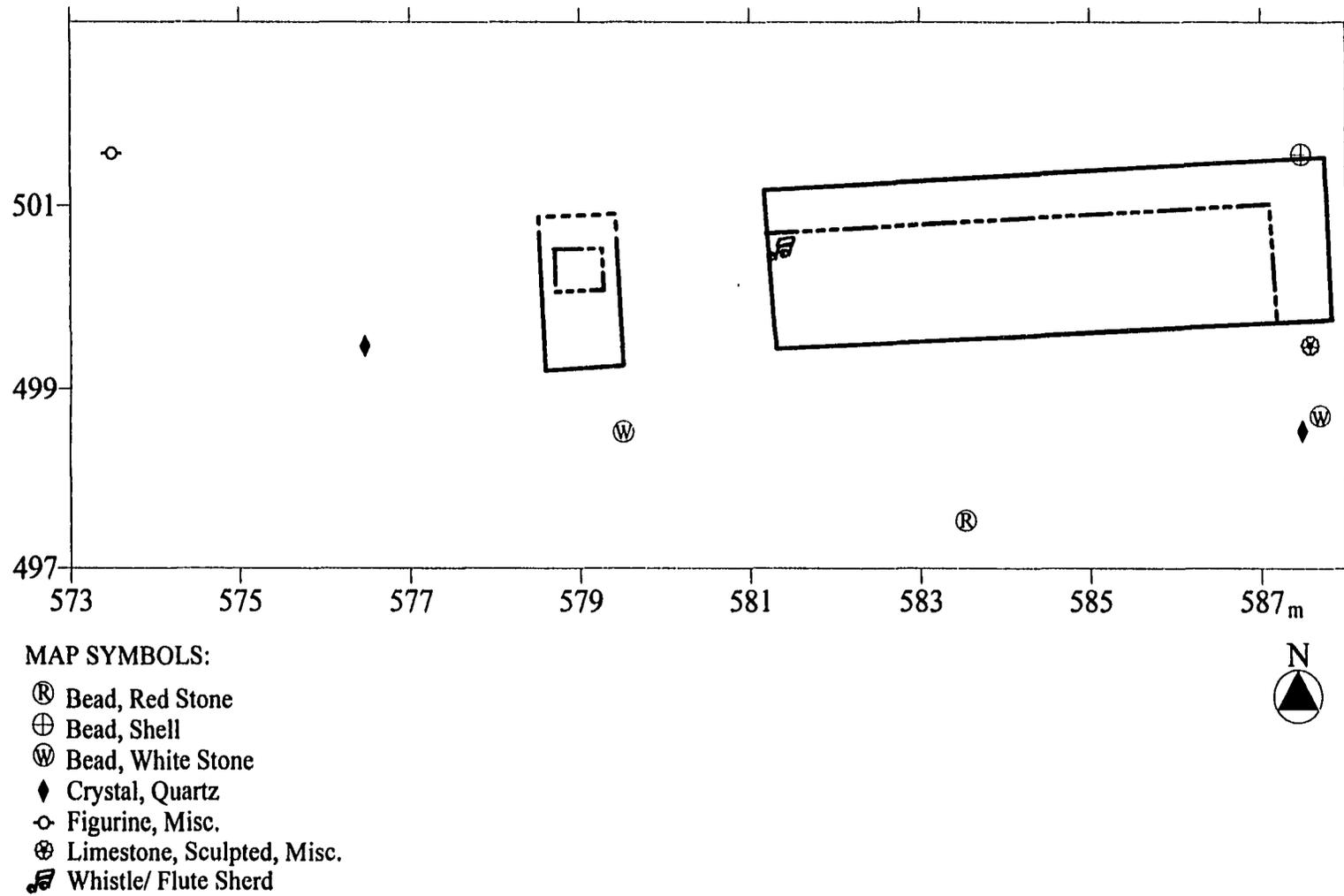


Figure 7-41. Zacpetén, Str. 607, Miscellaneous Uncommon Artifacts.

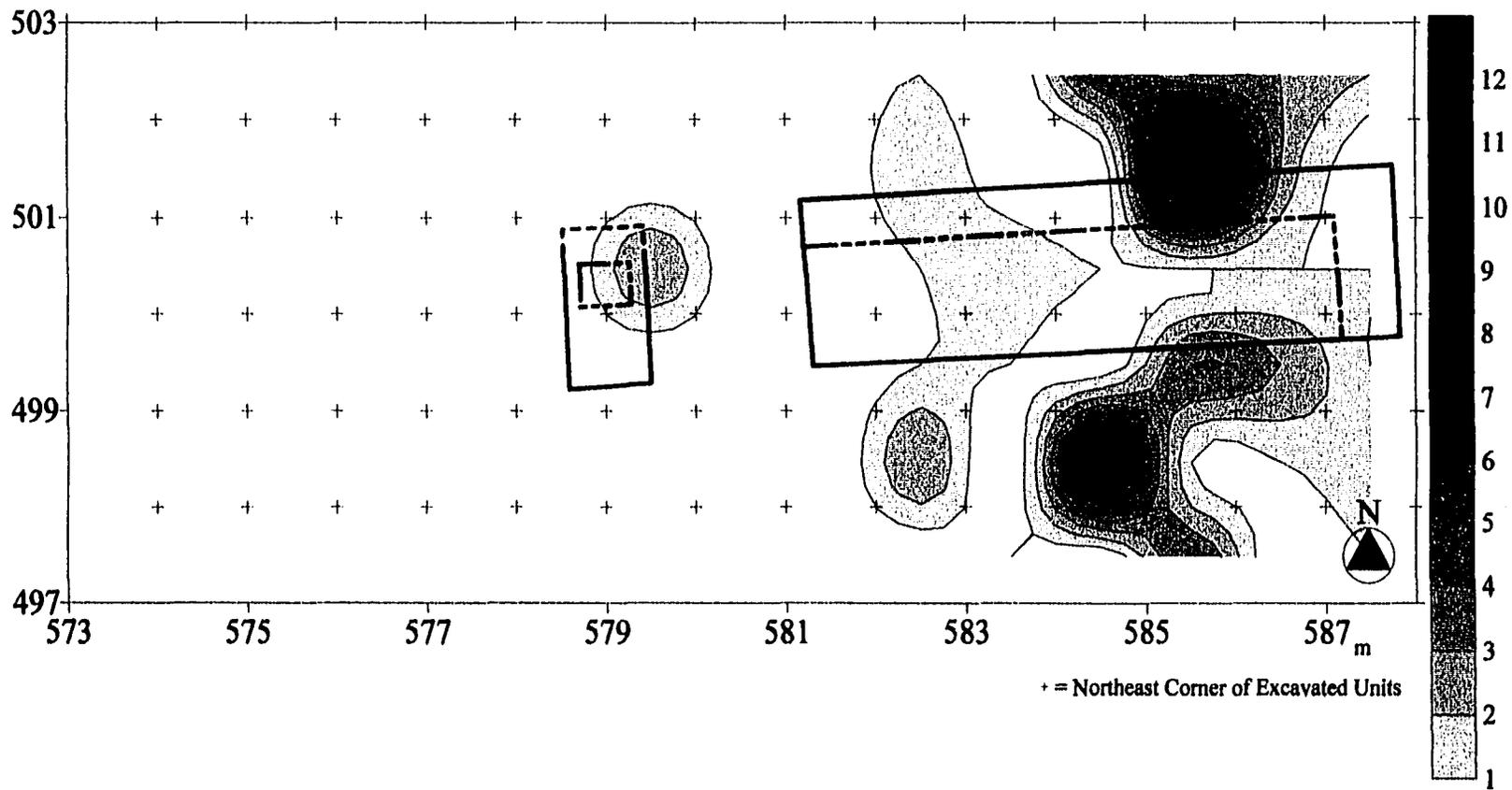


Figure 7-42. Zacpetén, Str. 607, Level 3B, Patojo Modeled Var. Patojo.

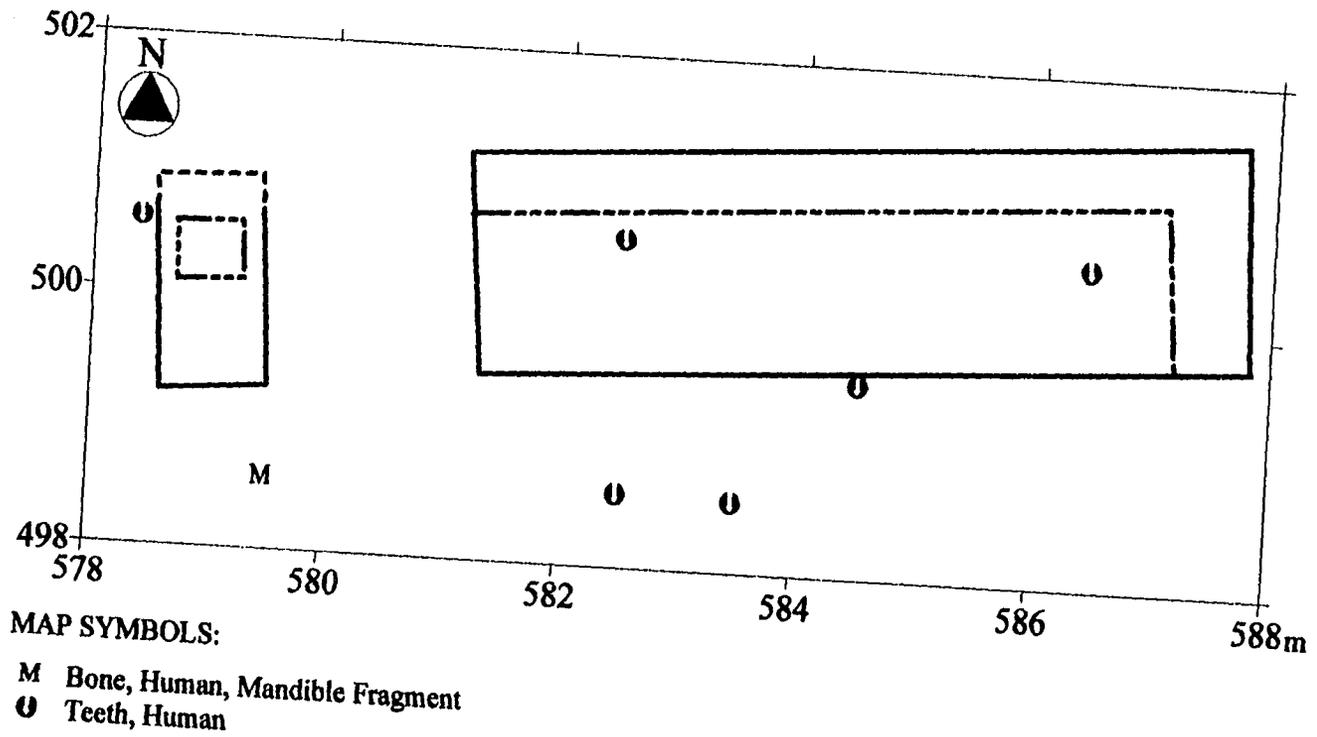


Figure 7-43. Zacpetén, Str. 607, Level 3B, Uncommon Bone and Shell.

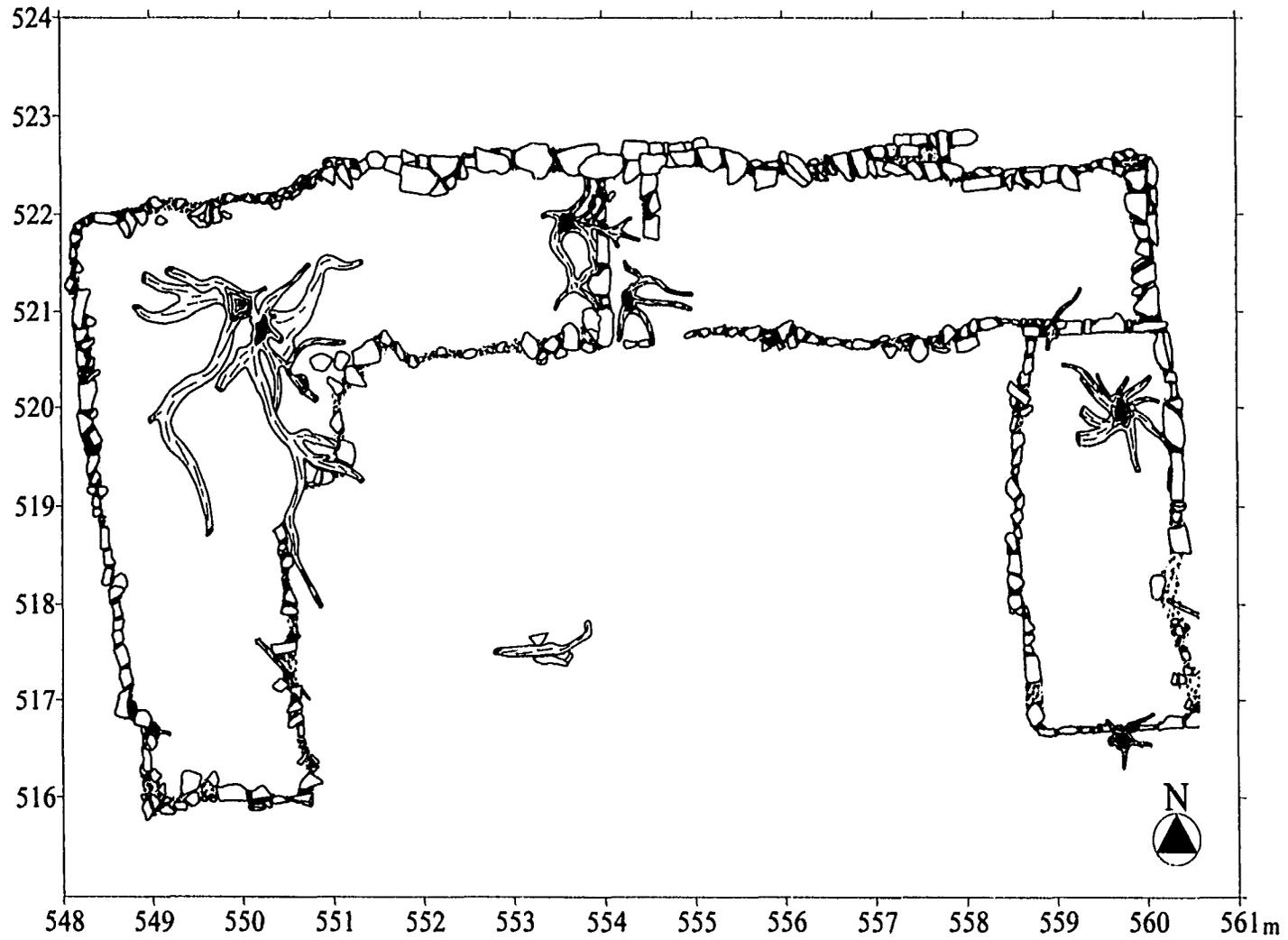


Figure 7-44. Zacpetén, Str. 614, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

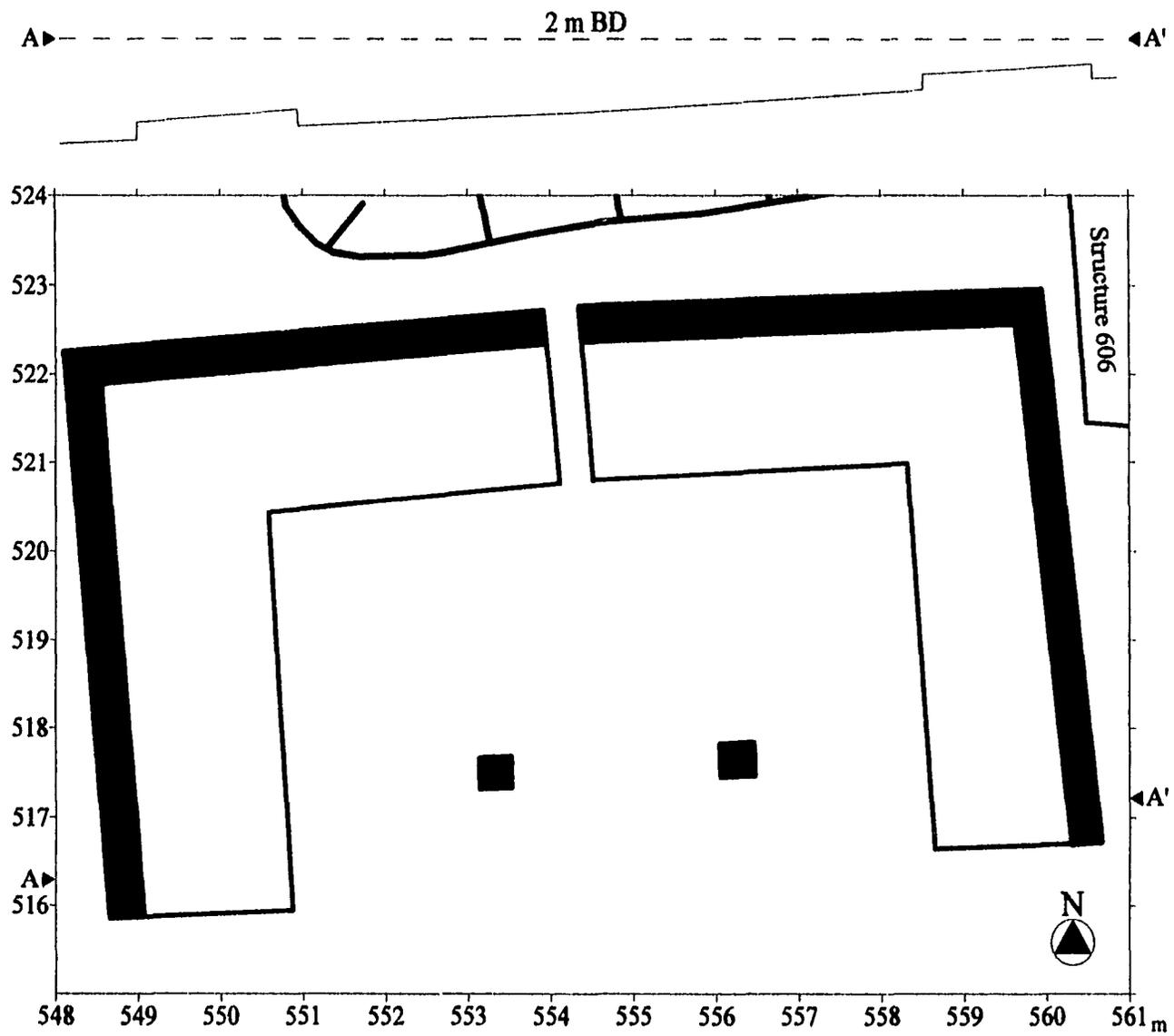


Figure 7-45. Zacpetén, Str. 614, Plan and Cross-Sections.

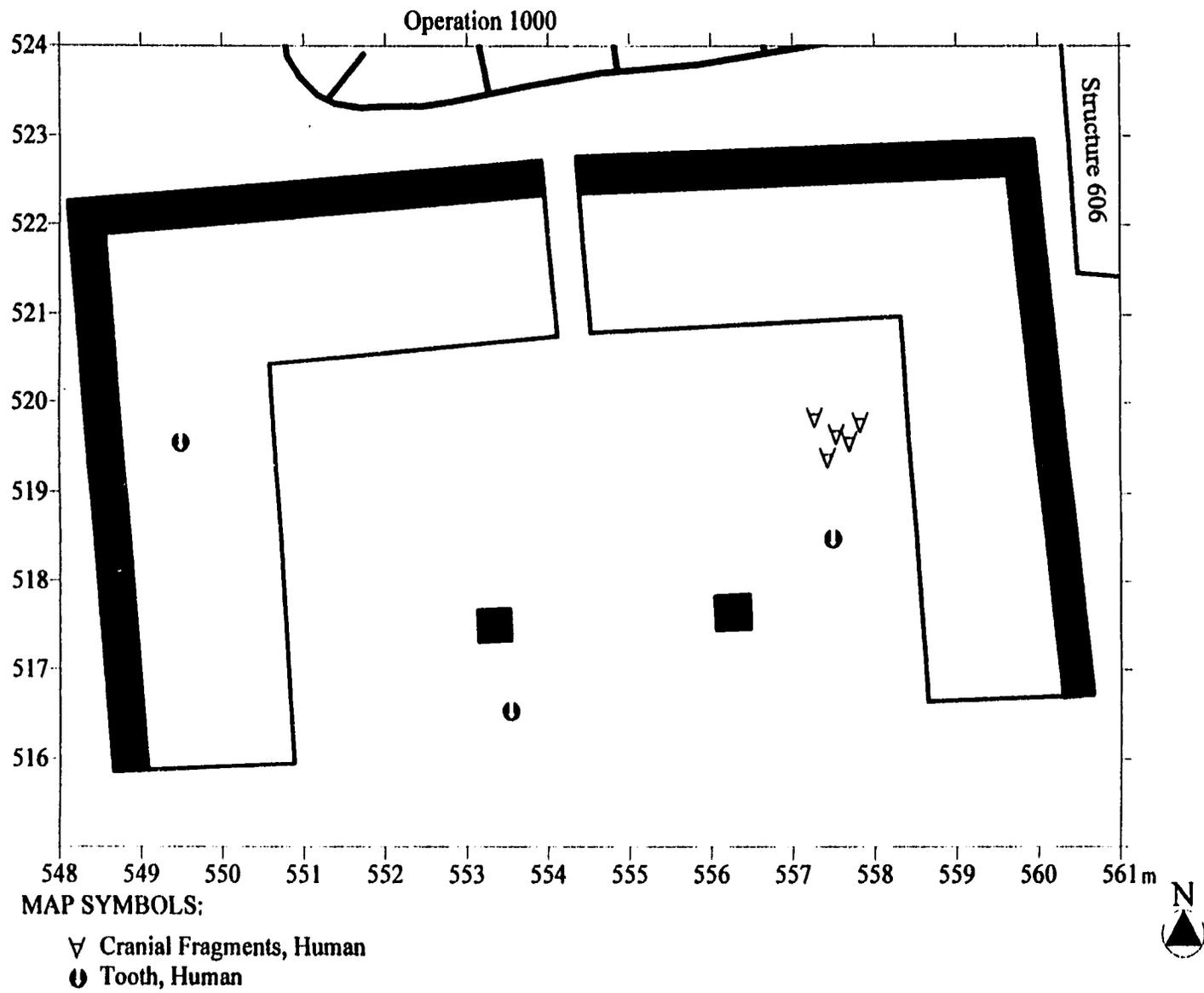


Figure 7-46. Zacpetén, Str. 614, Uncommon Bone and Shell.

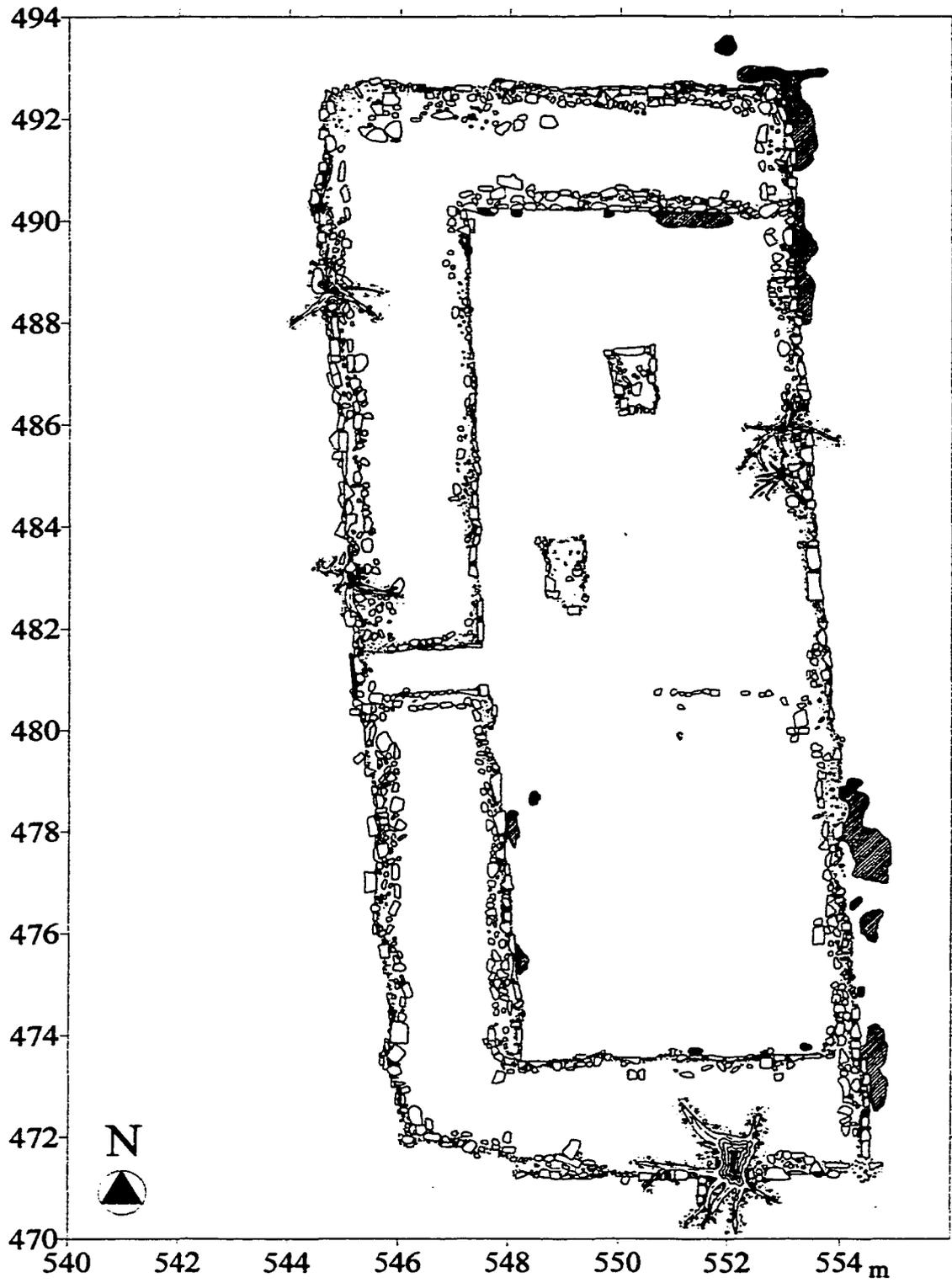


Figure 7-47. Zacpetén, Str. 615, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

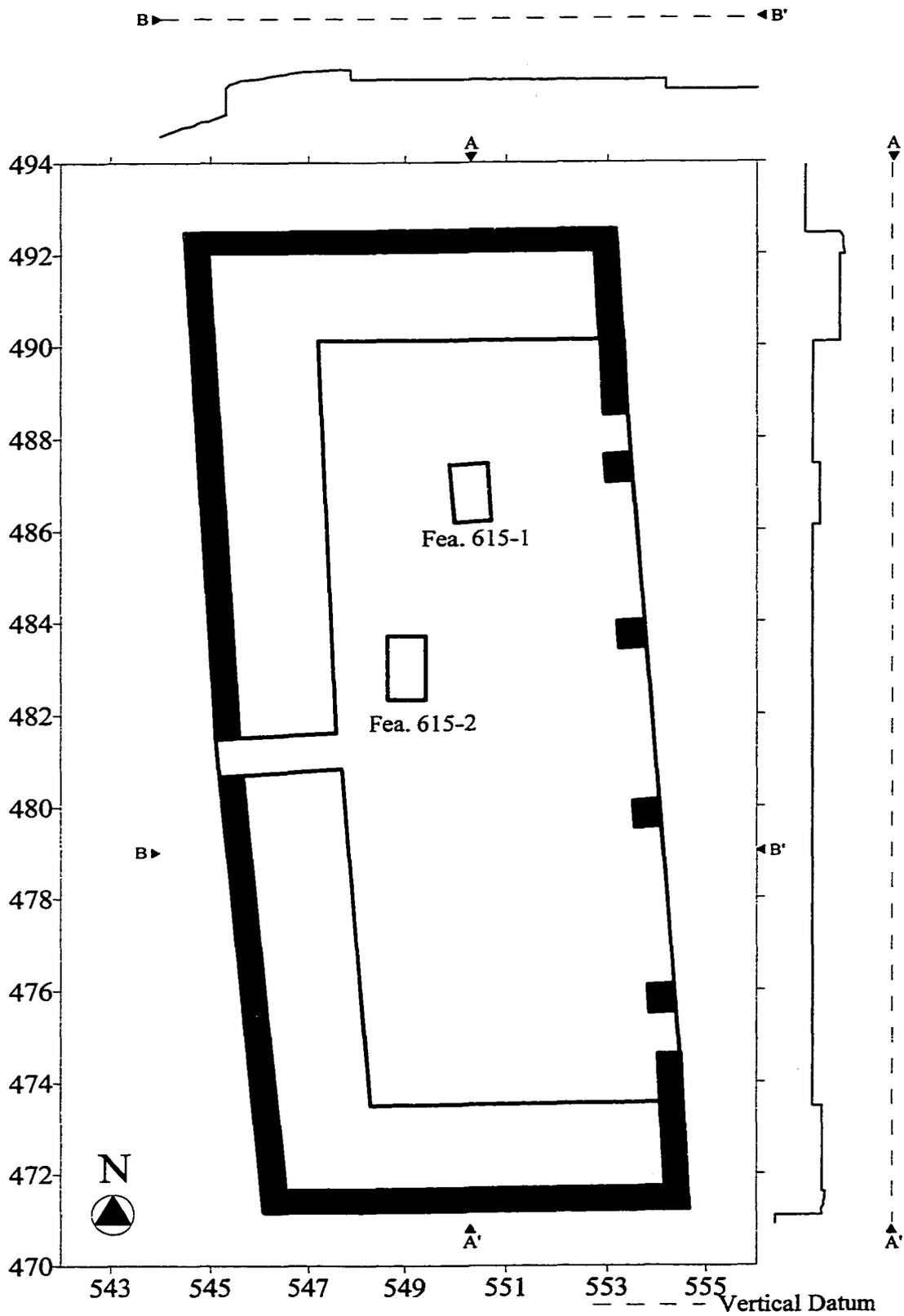


Figure 7-48. Zacpetén, Str. 615, Plan and Cross-Sections.

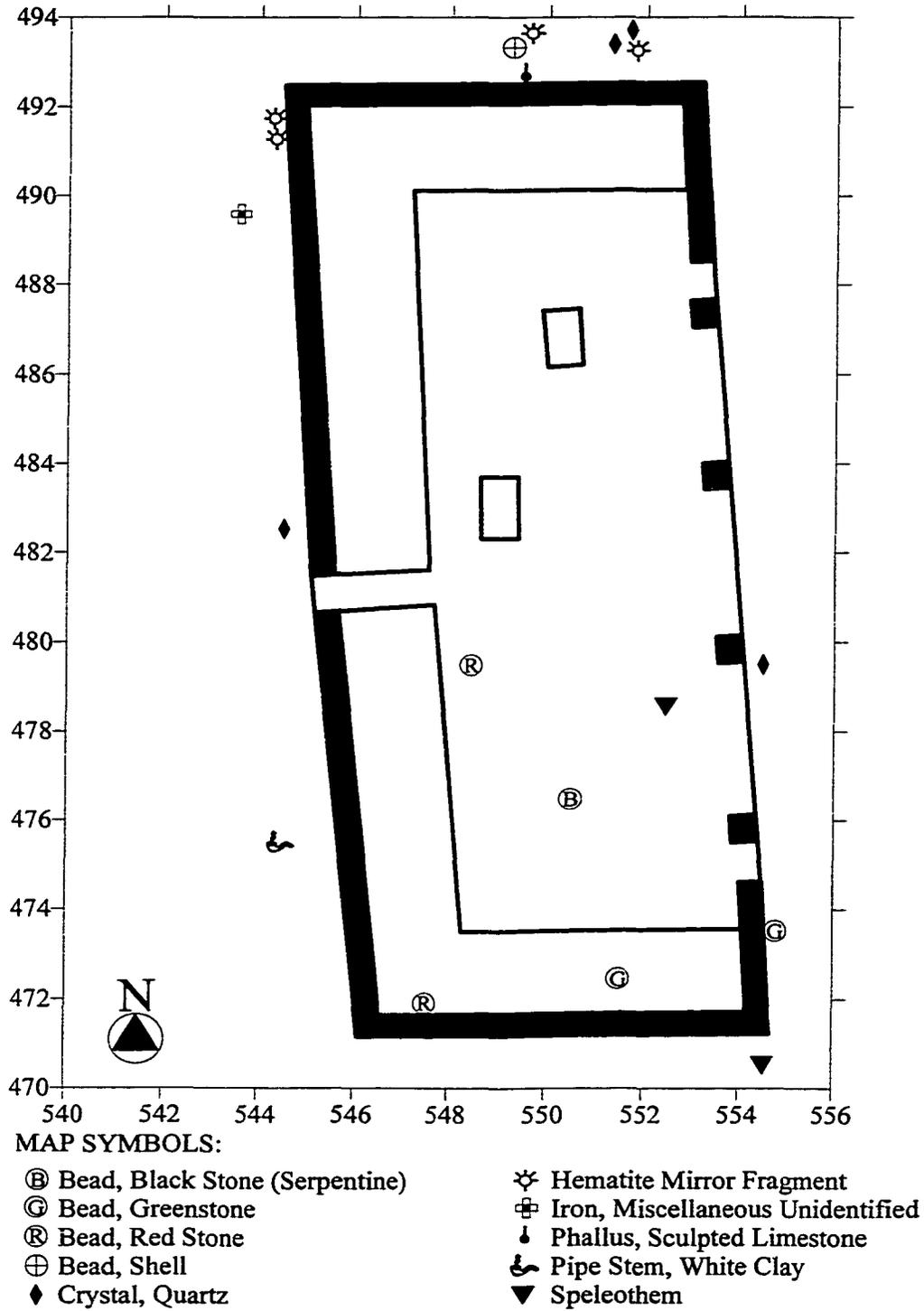


Figure 7-49. Zacpetén, Str. 615, Miscellaneous Uncommon Artifacts.

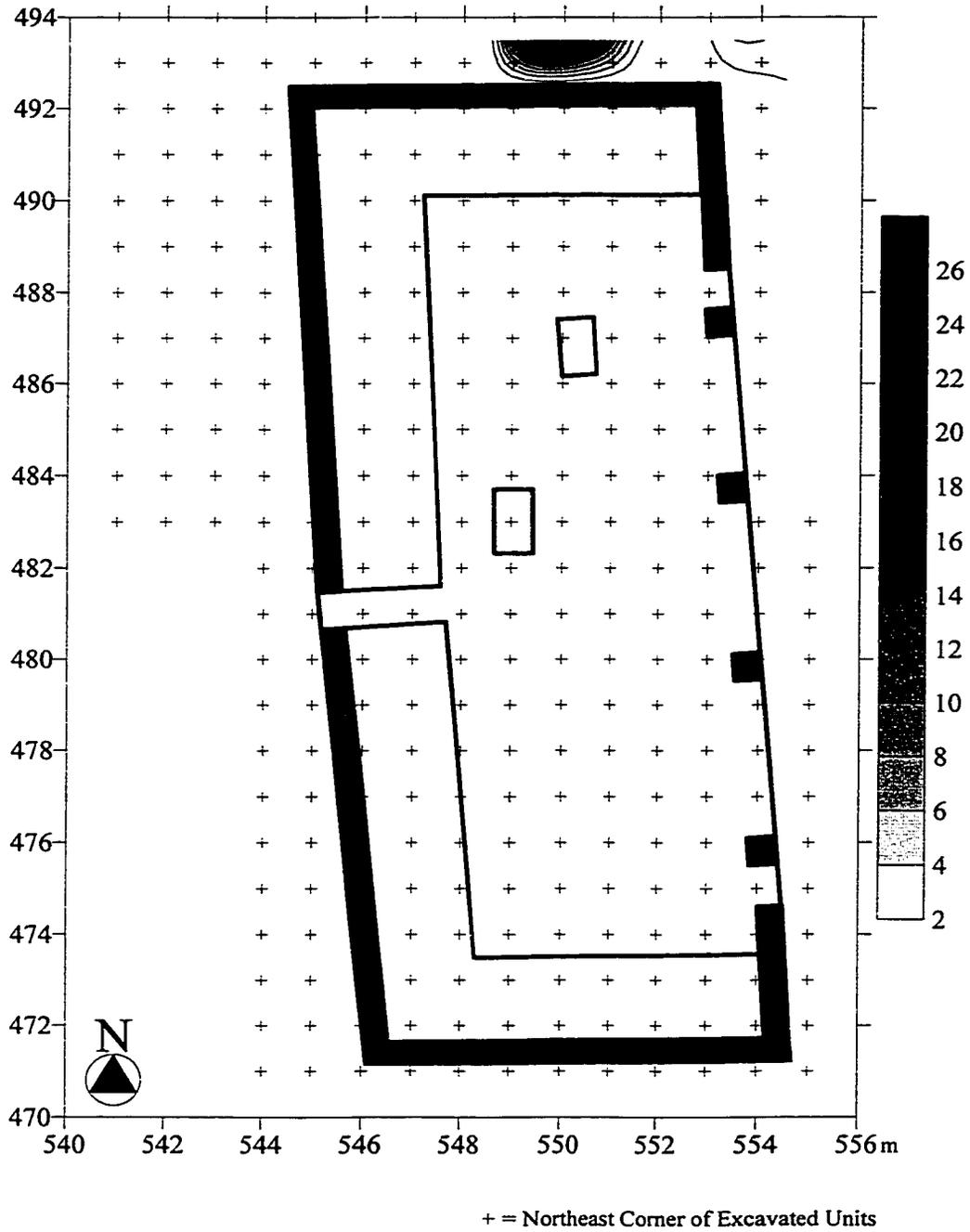
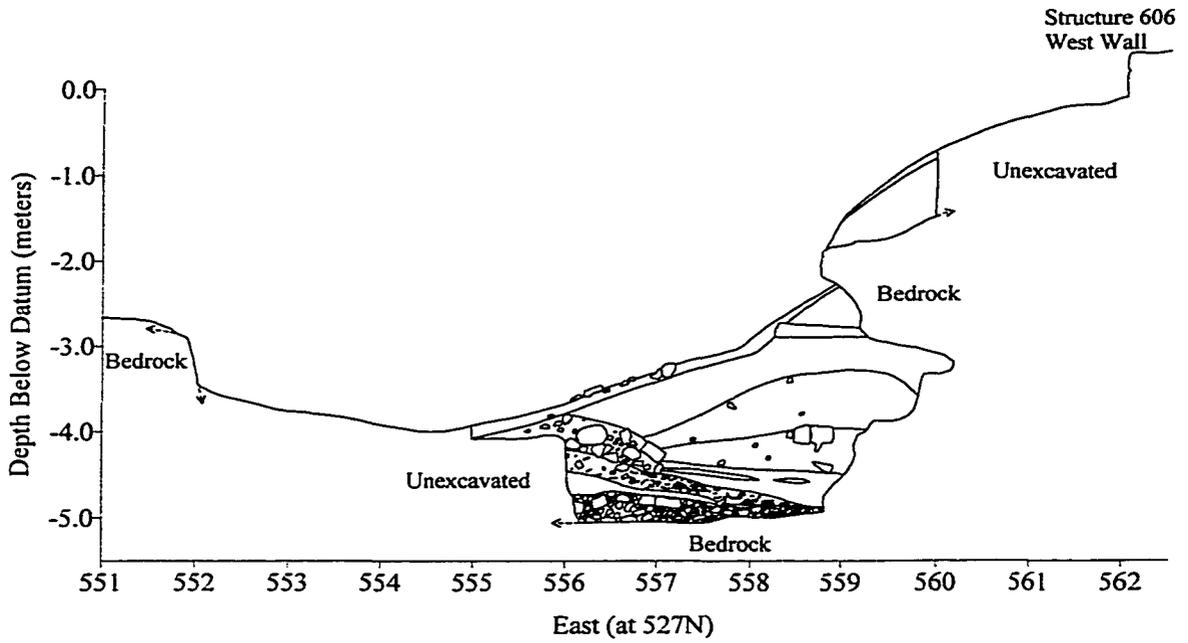
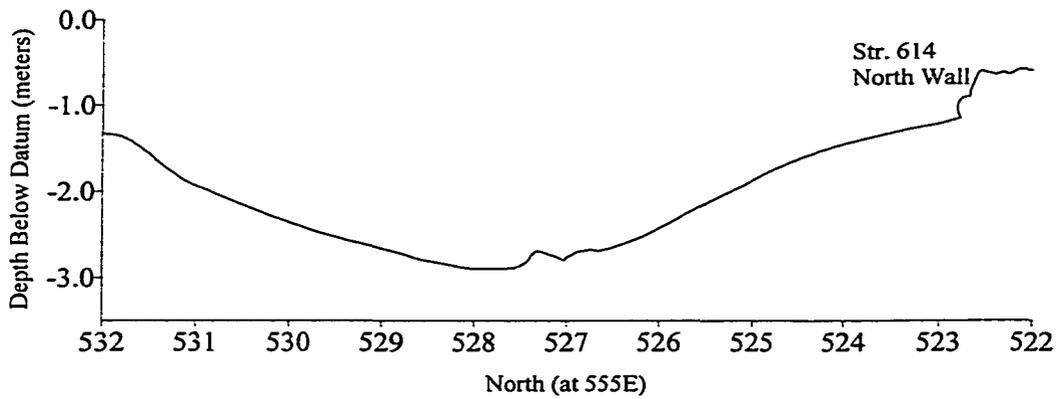


Figure 7-50. Zacpetén, Str. 615, Human Teeth.



East-West Cross Section with Excavation Profile.



North-South Cross Section.

Figure 7-51. Zacpetén, Op. 1000, Cross-Sections.

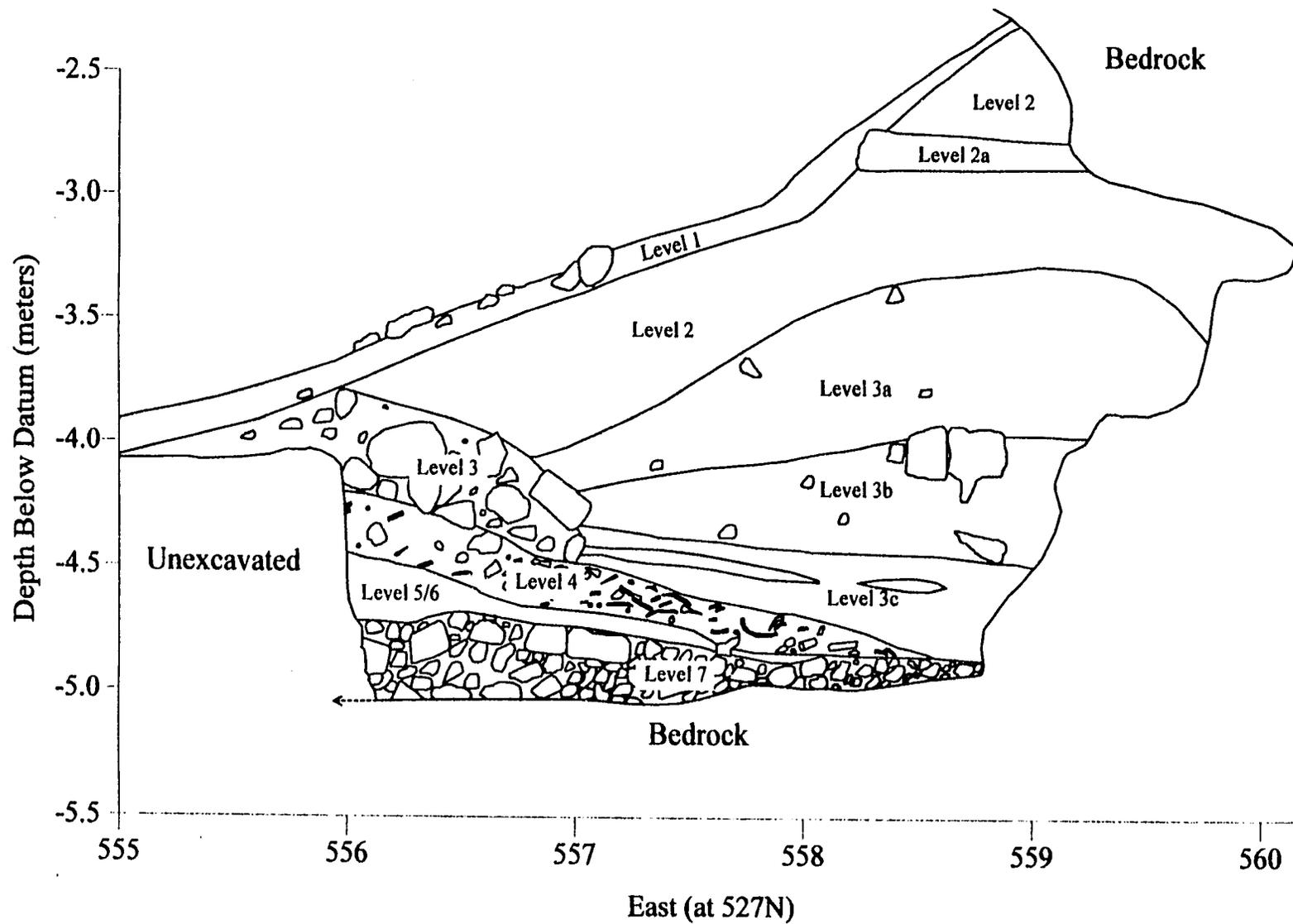


Figure 7-52. Zacpetén, Op. 1000, Detail of Stratigraphy, North Profile.

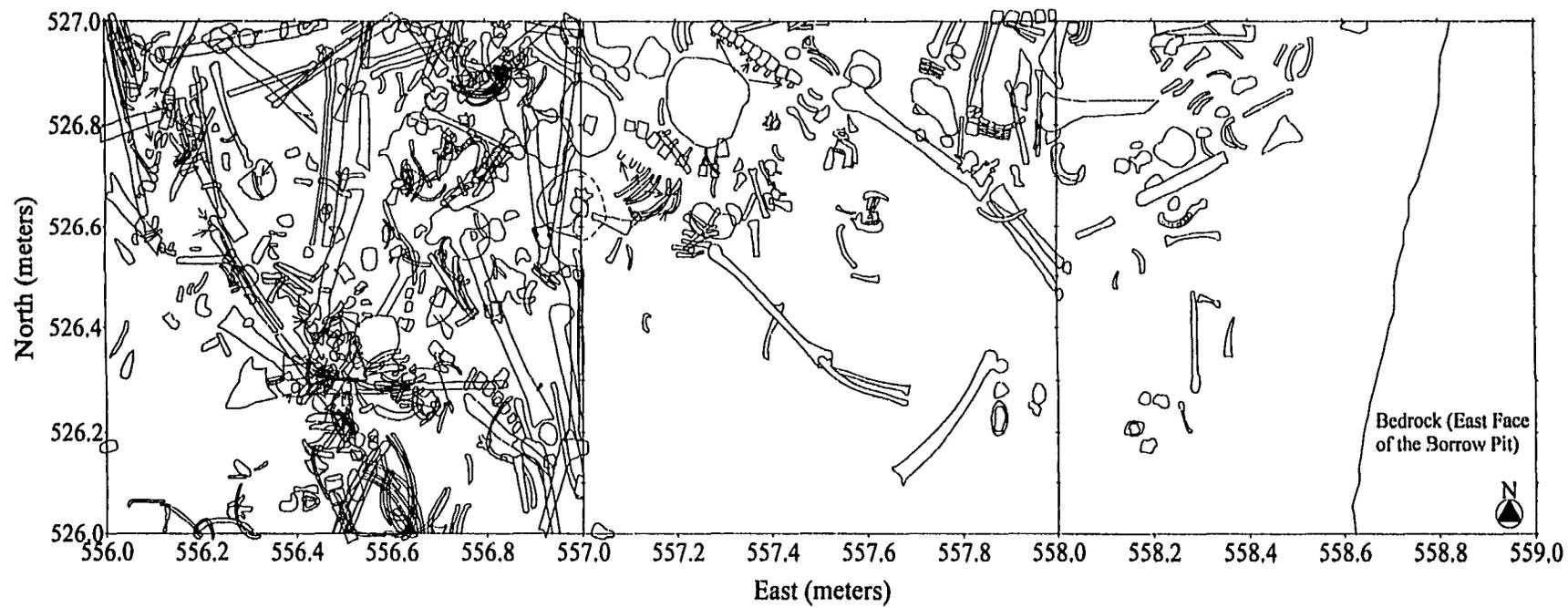


Figure 7-53. Zacpetén, Op. 1000, Level 4, Human Remains (All Layers).

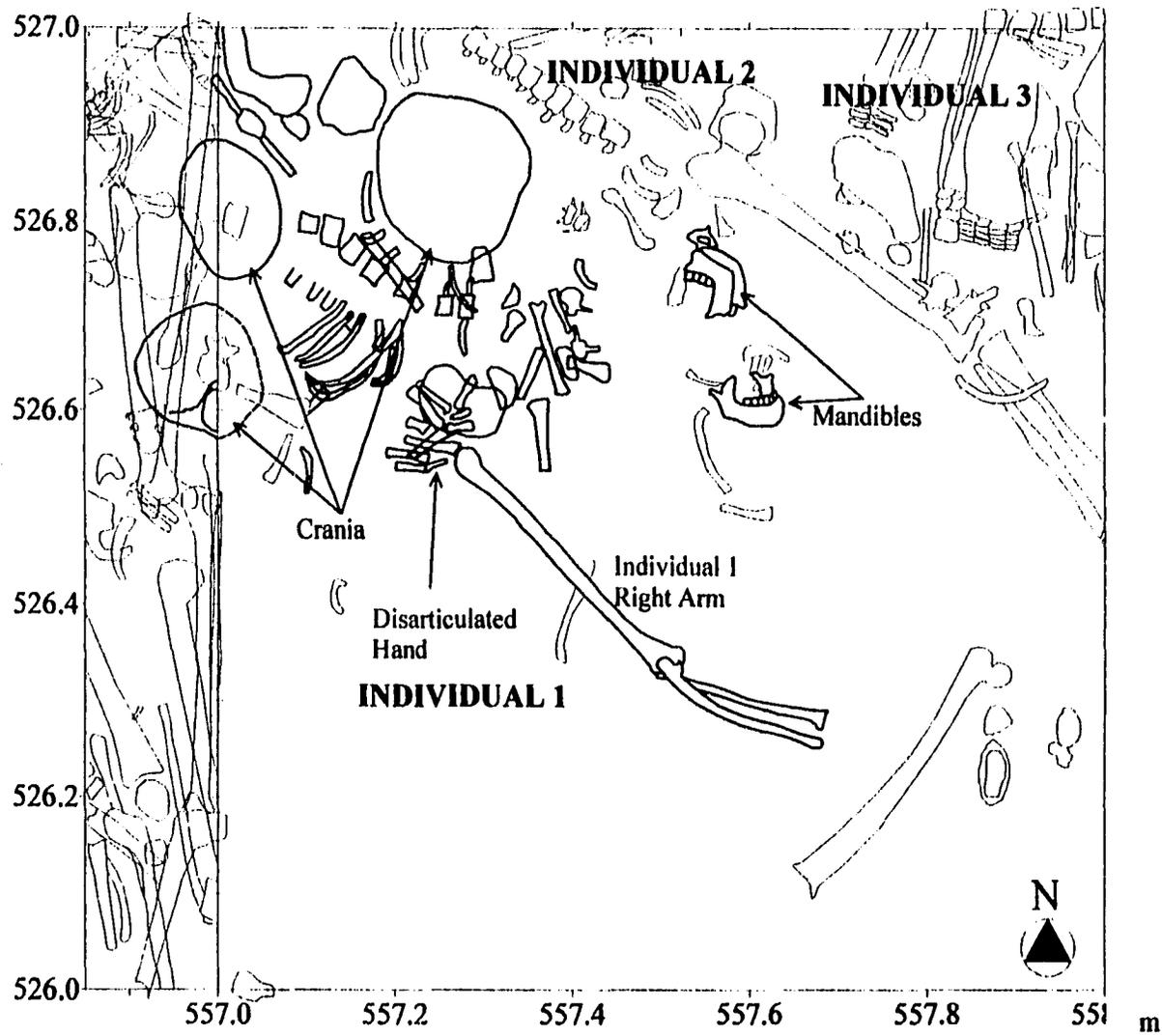


Figure 7-54. Zacpetén, Op. 1000, Level 4, Human Remains, Unit 527,558.

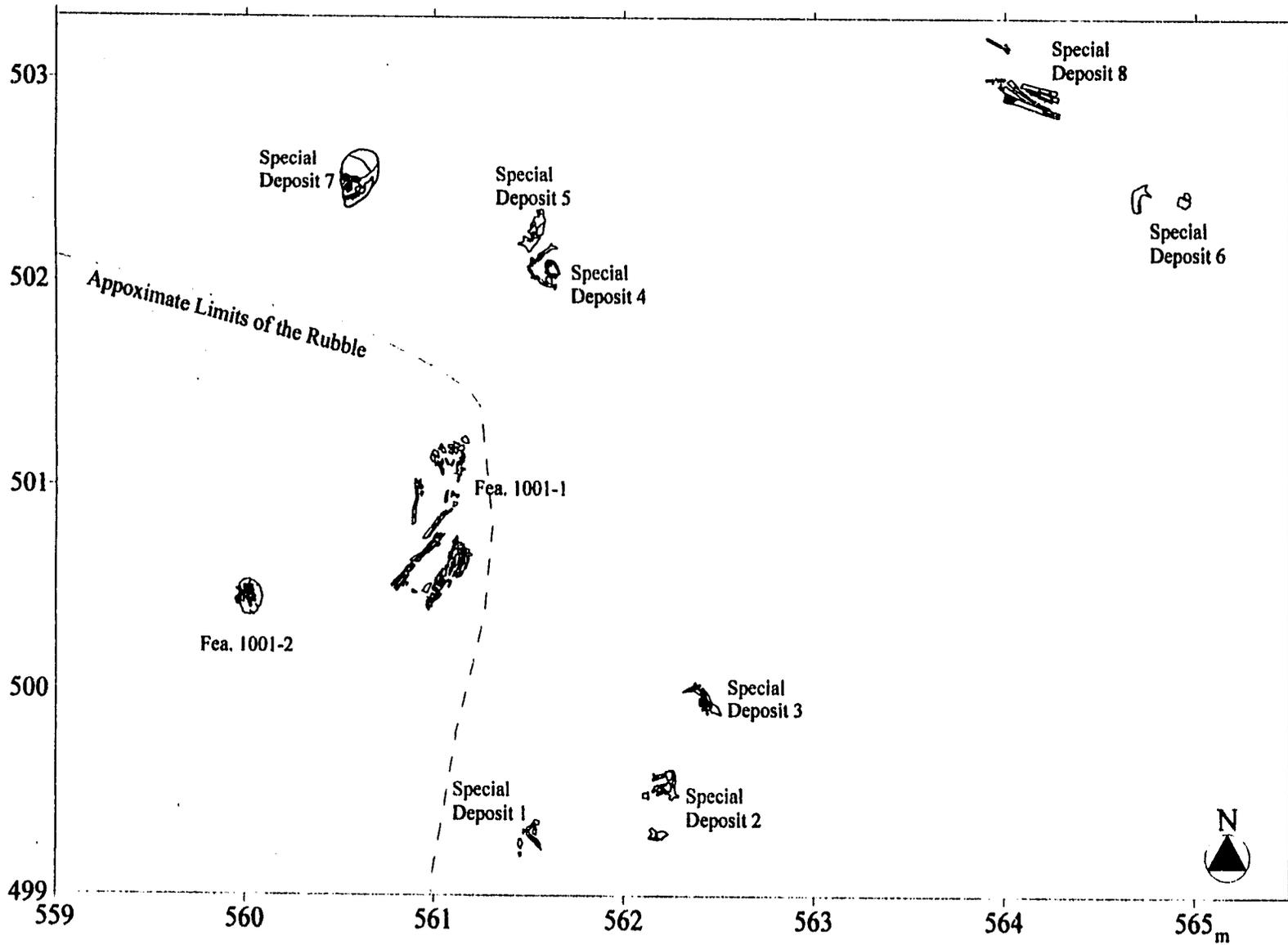


Figure 7-55. Zacpetén, Op. 1001, Cached Human Remains.

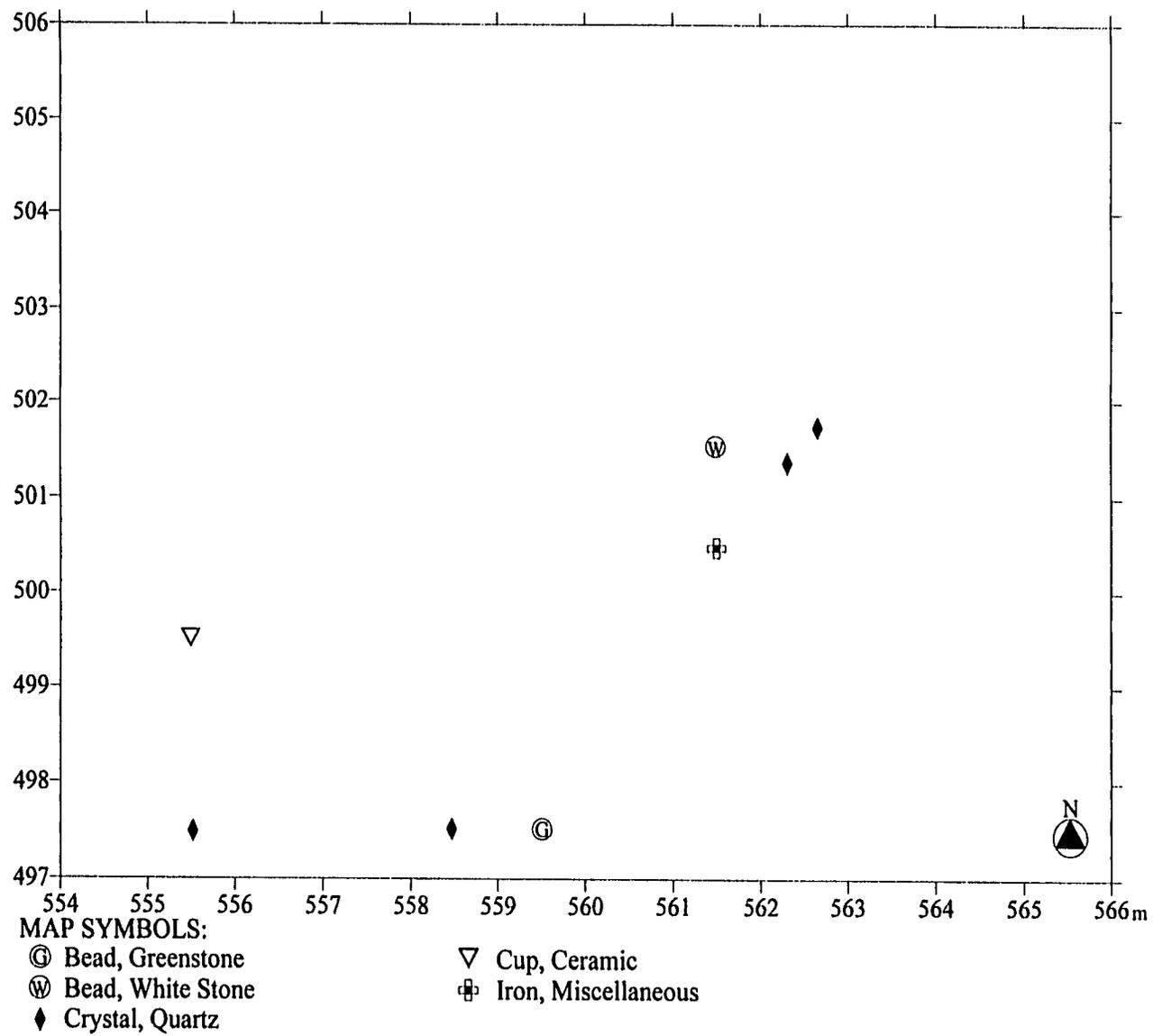


Figure 7-56. Zacpetén, Op. 1001, Miscellaneous Uncommon Artifacts.

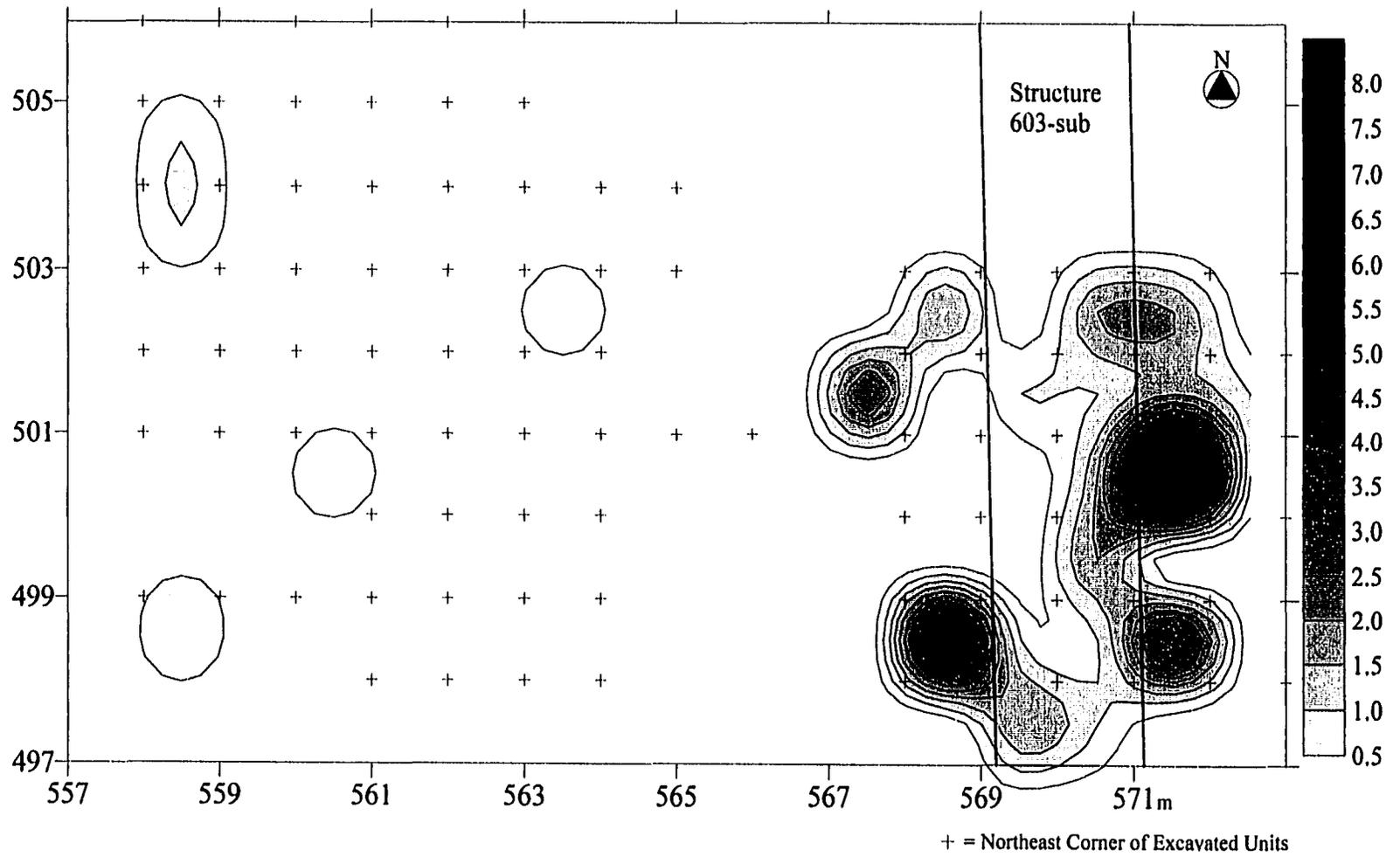
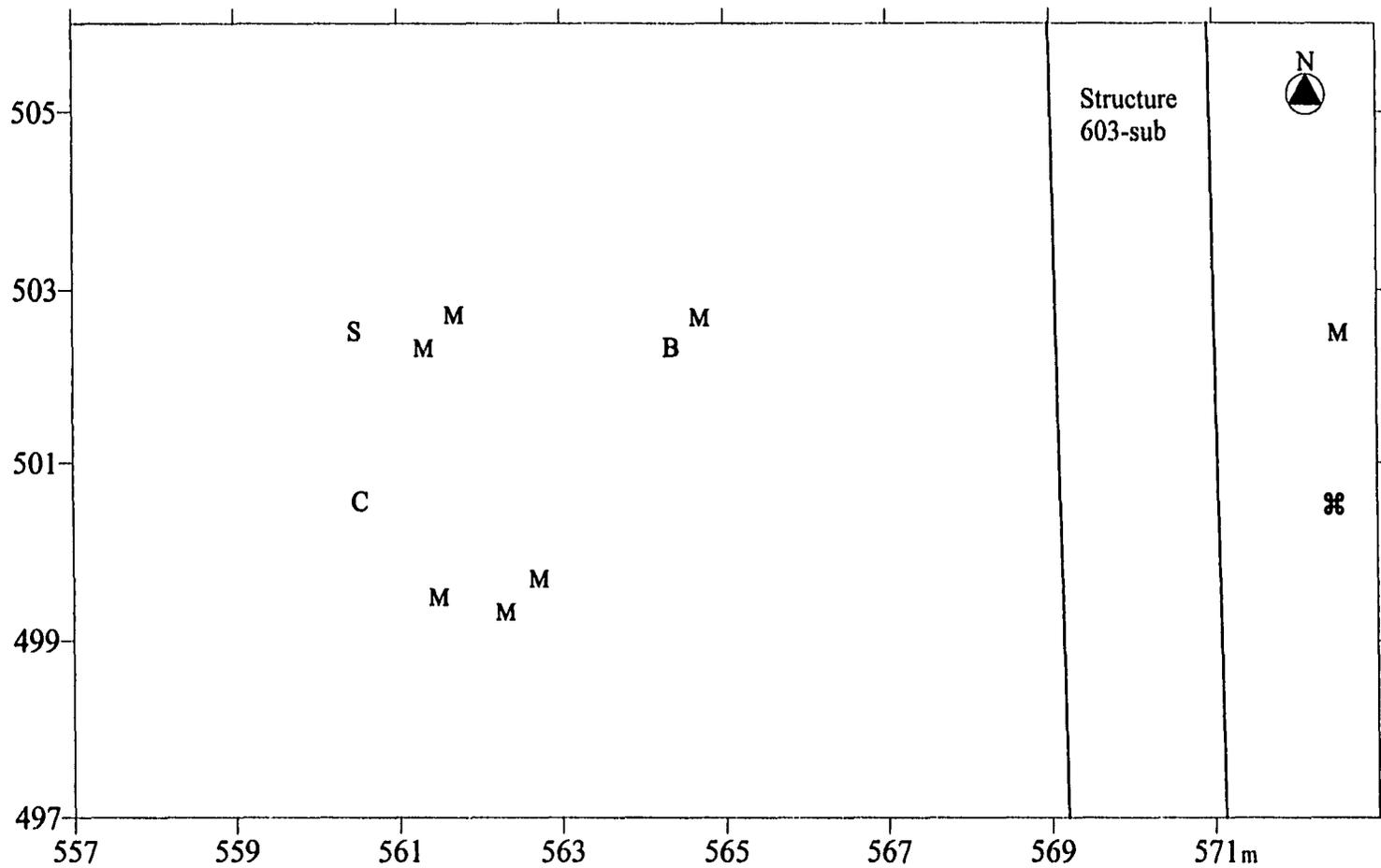


Figure 7-57. Zacpetén, Op. 1001, Level 3, Patojo Modeled Var. Patojo.



MAP SYMBOLS:

- B Bundle of Human Long Bones
- C "Cup", Human Neurocranium
- M Mandible, Human
- S Skull, Human, Complete
- ⌘ Gold Foil

Figure 7-58. Zacpetén, Op. 1001, Level 3, Special Deposits.

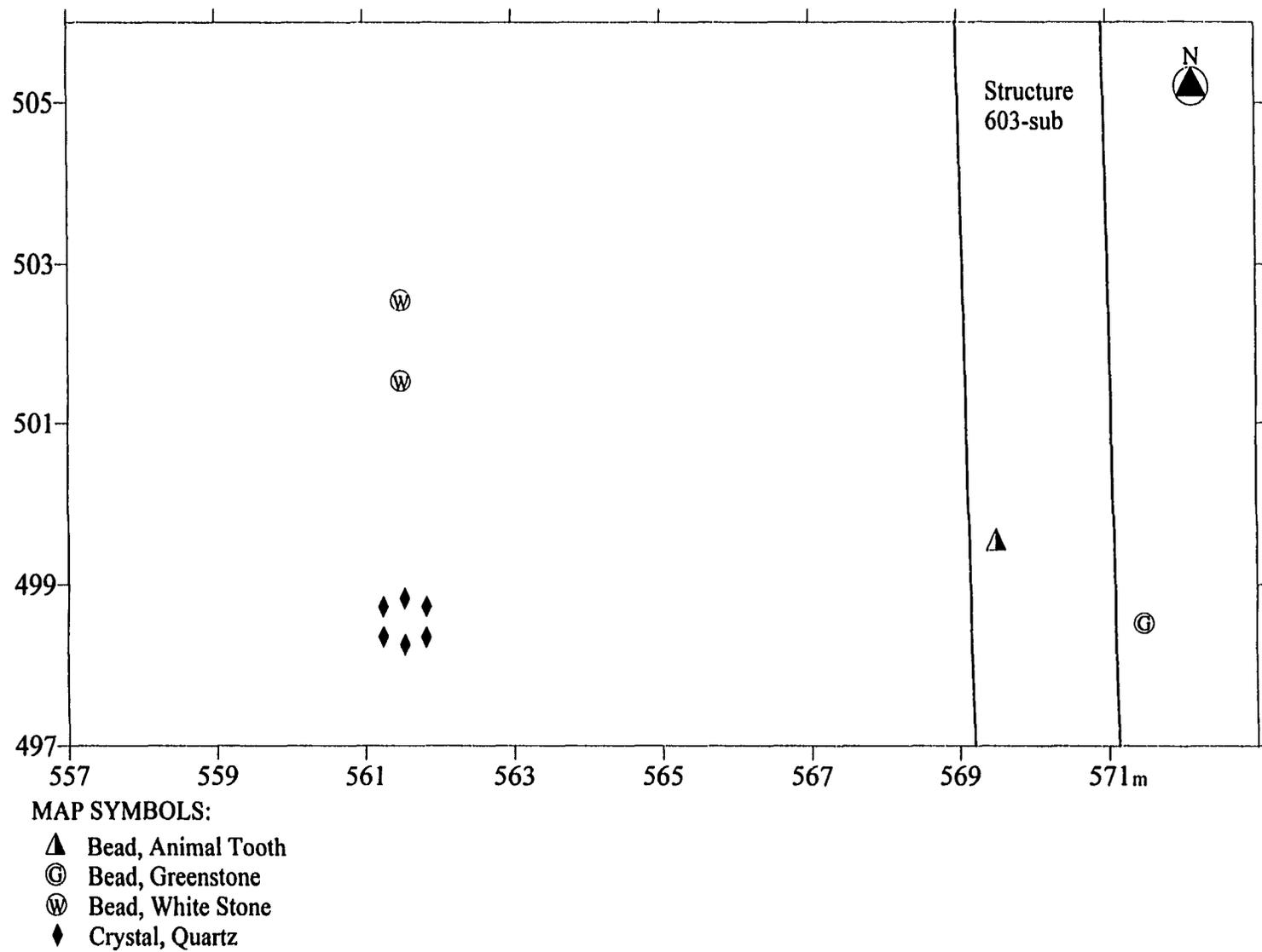


Figure 7-59. Zacpetén, Op. 1001, Level 3, Miscellaneous Uncommon Artifacts.

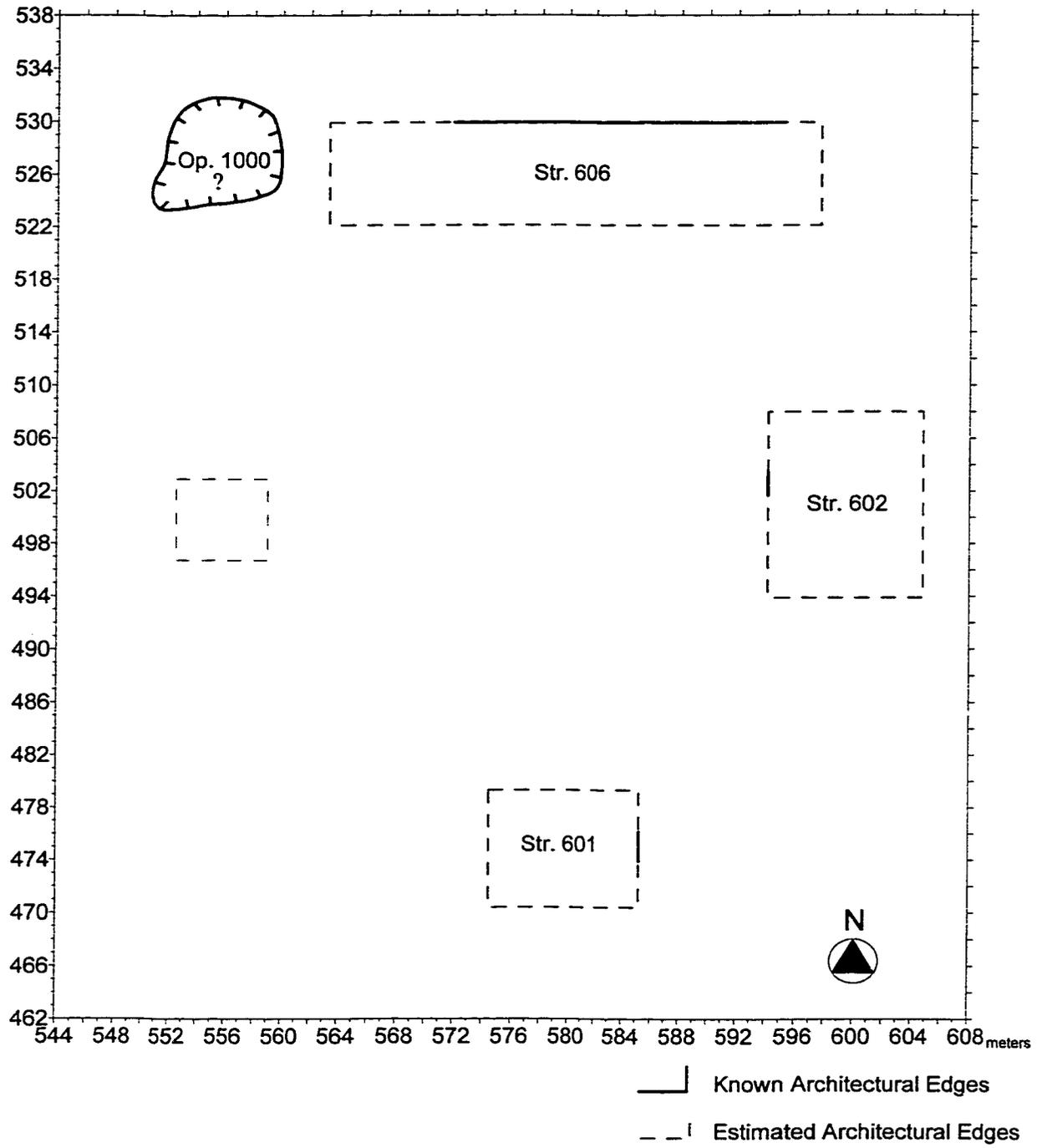


Figure 7-60. Zacpetén, Group A, Terminal Classic Layout.

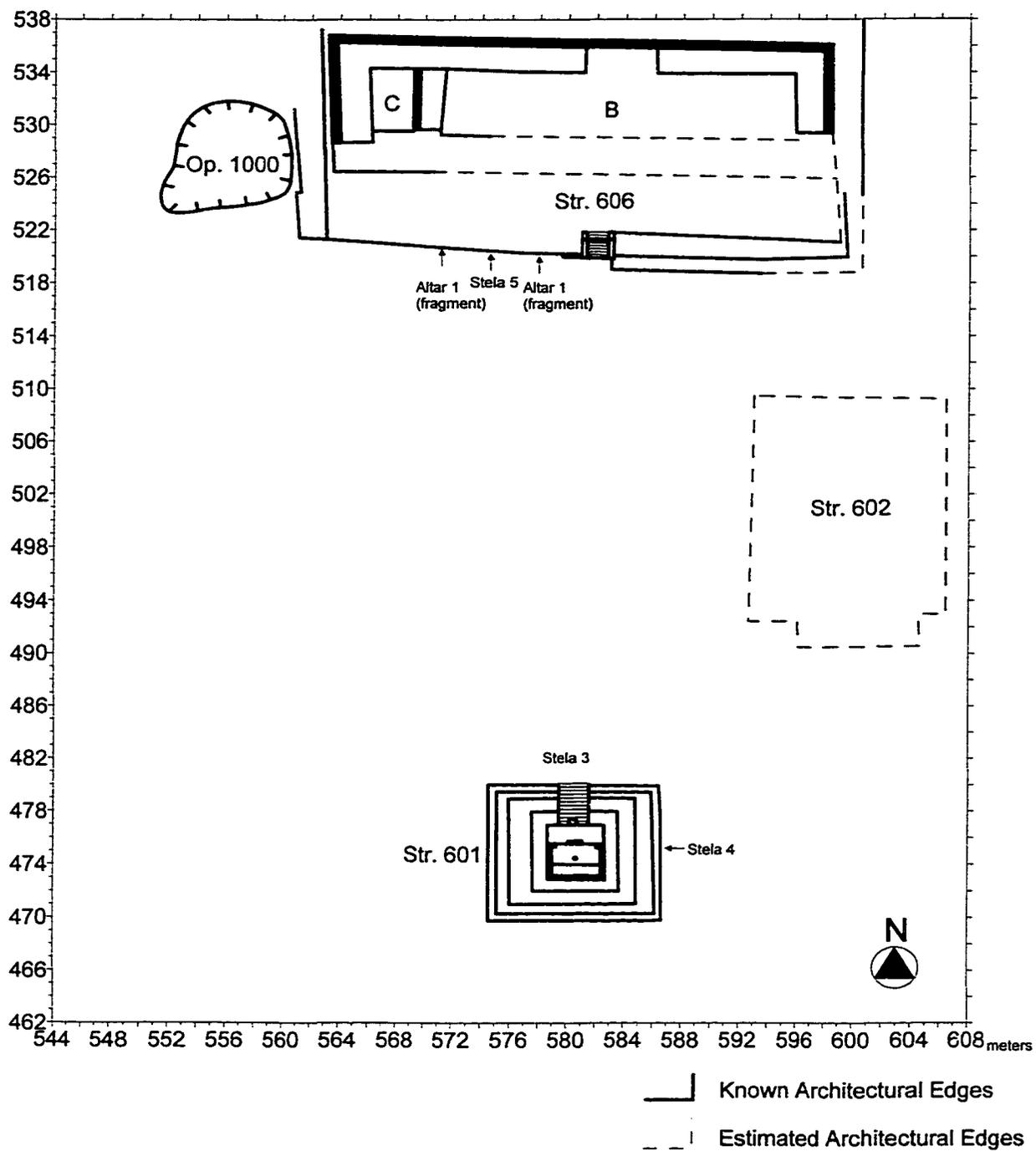


Figure 7-61. Zacpetén, Group A, Initial Postclassic Layout.

## CHAPTER 8: THE EXCAVATION OF GROUP C, ZACPETÉN

Group C rests on a hill in the southern part of the peninsula, approximately 30 m above Lake Salpetén. The core of the group is composed of a small temple assemblage, around which are concentrated numerous house platforms. Most of the buildings in the ceremonial area and two of the house mounds were excavated. The latter structures are discussed in Chapter 9. The ceremonial area is accessed by two stairways, one to the north and another to the west (Figure 8-1). The focal point of the group is Str. 764, the temple, which lies in the medial position on the east edge of the platform and faces west. North of the temple is Str. 1002, probably an oratorio, which also faces west. At a right angle to and south of Str. 764 is Str. 767, an open hall facing north. In front of the temple lies Str. 766A, a long low shrine, and Str. 766B, an altar. These five buildings combine all of the necessary elements in the proper pattern to form a Mayapán-style temple assemblage. However, the Petén version of the assemblage is completed by the presence of Str. 765, a raised shrine, on the northern side of the plaza (Pugh et al. 1997).

The most complete history of the plaza is found in Test Unit 892, 296 in Str. 767 (Figure 7-2). The uppermost floor in the unit is that of Str. 767 (Floor 1). This floor is contemporaneous with the final or fourth plaza surface. The third plaza surface (Floor 2) lies upon a Postclassic fill (Level 5) that rests upon the second plaza surface (Floor 3). This floor, in turn, lies upon a Terminal Classic fill (Level 6 and 7). Below Level 7 rests the first plaza surface (Floor 4), which was constructed upon a mixed, Postclassic and

Terminal Classic, fill of large limestone rubble that lay upon bedrock. This fill was disturbed by a burial cist (Burial 767-1) extending into the southern wall of the unit. It was likely a Postclassic burial. Human remains were found within, but were not completely excavated because the wall of the unit appeared dangerously unstable. A similar burial cist was encountered deep in the 1994 Test Unit 5 in Group C. Since Level 7 did not contain Postclassic materials, the burial pit likely widened at the base extending into and contaminated Level 8, which contained Postclassic materials. The earliest three floors (Floor 2 to 4) appear to have been plaza surfaces.

#### Access Points

Group C was formally accessed by two stairways, one on the northern side of the plaza and the other to the west. North of the northeast corner of Str. 765 lies the northern access point, a large well-preserved stairway leading down to a natural terrace of the hill upon which Group C rests (Figure 8-3). This stairway is oriented 357° east of north. A 37-m<sup>2</sup> excavation uncovered 100% of the stairway. There are no balustrades, but the edges are lined with limestone rubble that was flush with the natural surface. The 20 stairs are composed of hard limestone rubble slabs. This stairway negotiates only the upper 3.2 m of the hill and a very steep 16 m remain to be descended to arrive at the saddle between Groups A and C. The stairway that led down the remainder of the hill was not discernible from surface observation.

Concentrations of chert debitage and flakes, obsidian blades, miscellaneous ceramics, bone, and shell were encountered at the base of the northern stairway. This was either a refuse dumping area or a place where materials naturally eroded off the plaza of

Group C to settle upon the flat natural terrace. Without further evidence, the latter scenario appears more convincing, as the central access point to the Group seems an odd place to deposit refuse.

The western access to Group C is located north of the western arm of Str. 767 (Figure 8-1). This stairway is much smaller and cruder than the one to the north. It leads down to a lower terrace, 2.01 m below the level of the plaza of Group C. It has nine steps, but does not appear to have balustrades. The natural terrace upon which the western stairway descends was most likely the original level of Group C before the construction of the plaza. The western edge of this lower “natural” terrace appears to have been artificially retained and may have held a structure. No notable artifact concentrations were found on the western stairway.

#### Str. 764

Str. 764 is centered upon the eastern edge of the plaza of Group C (Figure 8-1) and faces due west (Figure 8-4 and 8-5). It is in the same position as a temple in a temple assemblage at Mayapán. Str. 764 is composed of a multi-terraced substructure topped by a five-doorway superstructure. Within the superstructure are a medial altar, L-shaped bench, and an interior altar/wall. A 373-m<sup>2</sup> excavation uncovered 100% of Str. 764. A fragment of wood in wall collapse behind the building was dated with AMS dating (Beta-112318)(Table 1-1) and was found to have a conventional radiocarbon age of  $585 \pm 45$  years before present (Table 6-2). The two sigma (95% probability) calibrated date for the same is A.D. 1299 to 1419.

### Architectural Composition of Str. 764

The platform of Str. 764 has two to three terraces depending upon the side of the building. The first terrace extends the entire length of the southern and eastern sides, but on the northern side, it merges into the platform of Str. 1002. Cache 1 was found at the base of the northeast corner of the first terrace. This cache included a miniature lidded egg-shaped vessel that did not contain any non-perishable artifacts. The walls and the terrace surface were once covered by plaster, which is presently quite eroded. The first terrace does not exist on the west side of Str. 764; a low bench lies north of the stairway, but not to the south. It is faced by vertical slabs, leading to its identification as a bench. In all, the first terrace does not seem to have been constructed with much consideration for symmetry. The first terrace and western bench were added onto the second terrace, perhaps to remodel a preexisting building following a different template and/ or to provide a buttress for the wall of the latter terrace.

The second terrace forms the majority of the mass of the platform of Str. 764. Only the western 4.4 m of this terrace is visible as the rest supports the third terrace. The plaster surface of this terrace had several oval burned spots, which may have resulted from the burning of offerings. The west or facade wall of the second terrace is better constructed and composed of limestone blocks with stucco still adhering to it in some places. The lowest course of the second terrace south of the stairway has larger blocks and a couple of circular burn spots lay on the adjacent plaza surface.

The temple's central, western stairway is inset and leads from the plaza to the top of the second terrace. It has 13 stairs and is composed of squared limestone rubble. Despite a small tree in its center, it is relatively well preserved. The lower portion of the

balustrade is sloped, but the upper part is eroded. At the base of the stairway extending from and centered upon the last step was a small stairway altar covered with plaster.

The third terrace is simply a 0.5 m rise in the second terrace. This rise is held by a poorly preserved retaining wall of medium-sized random rubble. The third terrace surface was constructed twice and the original was constructed at the same time as the second terrace. No stairway was found between the second and third terraces. The surface of the third terrace was once painted with bi- or polychrome designs (Figure 8-6). These designs are linear red segmented bands filled with red and black designs. The primary band(s) lay 30 cm west of and parallel to the columns, and additional bands extended perpendicularly south of this band. These may be blocks of glyphs or a patolli board. The latter seems most likely because the ladder-like patterns lie perpendicular to one another. Patolli boards were incised on the floors of some buildings at Tikal (Becker 1999: 58). Instead of X's, "places" in the painting on the floor of Str. 764 were marked with mat motifs, similar to "places" on game boards at Maintzunun, Belize. (see Graham 1985: Fig. 6). There may be several patolli boards with at least one adjacent to the northern and the southern columns. The segmented mat motif is also similar to designs on Petén ceramics linked to rulership (Rice 1989: 311-312) and to motifs painted on buildings at Tulum (Lothrop 1924: Plate 7). The plaster surface of the third terrace has numerous burned spots, even on the painted designs.

The superstructure of Str. 764 is enclosed by masonry walls to the north, south, and east, but is open with five columns to the west (Figure 8-5). The interior of the building contains a medial altar along the east wall and an L-shaped bench along the southern wall and the southern part of the east wall. An additional bench may have once

existed to the north of the altar; however, if this were the case, all that remained of this bench at the time of excavation was fill. An interior altar runs from north to south, nearly dividing the building in half.

The five columns of Str. 764 are rectangular and partially made of crude courses of cut soft limestone blocks. In addition to the columns, there must have been a bearing return wall at the western edge of the southern bench, which supported the lintel of the superstructure. Consequently, the temple had a five-doorway entrance making it anomalous relative to most three doorway Late Postclassic period Maya temples.

The north and south walls enclosing the superstructure are very eroded. The westernmost part of the south wall is composed of cut soft limestone blocks and slabs, of which only the lowest course remains. This material matches the construction of the five columns. Stucco still adhering to the exterior walls demonstrates that they were once covered by plaster. The plaster surface of the floor of the superstructure rests 2.5 m above the surface of the plaza. Portions of the surface still bear solid traces of a black wash including much of the floor adjacent to the medial altar and patches east of the third and fourth columns from the north. No evidence suggests the superstructure floor was painted with designs like the third terrace, but it may have been painted black.

The medial altar is terribly eroded. Excavations into the altar did not reveal any special deposits, but, as discussed below, a cache may have eroded out of it. The interior altar/wall is a low feature that bisects the superstructure. The bench of Str. 764 is L-shaped and rests along the south wall and the southern portion of the east wall. The retaining walls of the bench are poorly preserved, but most of it is composed of hard limestone rubble set as vertical slabs.

### Previous Constructions of Str. 764

Three 2 x 2 m test pits were excavated into Str. 764. These units revealed that Str. 764 was the product of several construction stages. In Test Unit 902, 312 (Figure 8-7), bedrock was encountered 2.9 m b.d. Directly upon bedrock was compact clay that leveled out the surface. In Test Unit 907, 318 (Figure 8-8), a couple of Postclassic low walls (Str. 764-I) were found in association with the leveling of the bedrock. Directly upon the compact clay and walls were deposited numerous Postclassic fill episodes. In Test Unit 905, 314 (Figure 8-9), the eastern platform wall of an earlier Postclassic building (Str. 764-II) was encountered. The wall ran north to south, facing 2° east of north. The base of this wall is 2.5 m b.d. and the top, which is covered by a plaster floor, is 1.36 m b.d. This plaster floor was constructed twice and beneath it was Burial 764-1.

The primary individual in Burial 764-1 was an adult oriented north/south in a prone position with the legs tightly flexed and the arms extended at the sides (Figure 8-9). The individual was buried “face down,” but lacks a cranium and may have been beheaded, or the interment might have been reopened and bones removed. Headless burials are not rare among the Maya and similar burials in Late Postclassic temples were found at Mayapán (Shook 1954: 258) and Topoxté (Pinto and Noriega 1995: 695). Preliminary osteological analysis has indicated that the remains of another adult and a child accompanied the headless individual (Duncan 1999).

The west wall of Str. 764-II was widened to the west after its initial construction. Architectural features inside the superstructure of Str. 764-II were encountered in Test Unit 907, 318. In the southeast corner of the unit was found a rectangular altar or bench that stood 0.15 m above the floor. In the southeastern portion of the unit, a wall base was

found. Beneath the floor of Str. 764-II was Cache 2, a lidded cache vessel (Figure 8-8). This cache was actually associated with the final construction of Str. 764 because there was a disturbance in the plaster floor of Str. 764-II directly above it suggests the excavation of a cache pit. Late Postclassic censer sherds were found in the fill covering the cache, further suggesting a late deposition. Adjacent to Cache 2 were the sherds of a smashed vessel. The vessel type has not yet been identified, but it may have been the original cache, which had been terminated similar to that encountered in Str.602.

The cache vessel was unslipped, but it had two loop handles on the rim and one on the lid. In situ, the opposing loop handles on the rim were oriented approximately 18° east of north. Cache 2 was somewhat odd in that the lid was very difficult to remove. Once the lid was removed, a dark material marked the contact points between the lid and vessel and may have been a sealant of some sort. The interior of the vessel was burned and a white residue was found on it and some of its contents, which included colored stone beads, a coral fragment, shells, and copper foil (Figure 8-10).

Upon Str. 764-II was built the final version of the structure (764-III, but referred to as simply Str. 764), the primary subject of the investigations. The three terraces and superstructure, described above, were part of this construction. In Test Unit 1, just west of the edge of the third terrace, one can observe an earlier plaster surface (Floor 2) of Str. 764; therefore, it was renovated at least once.

#### Artifact Distributions of Str. 764

The artifact distribution maps of Str. 764 illustrate several key spatial divisions: concentrations overlapping with wall collapse, a concentration south of the first terrace, outside versus inside the superstructure, and east versus west of the interior altar. In

artifact categories associated with architectural fill, such as miscellaneous ceramics, bone, and shell (Figure 8-11), concentrations tend to overlap with architectural edges, especially west of the outer platform edge. The majority of the artifacts originated from the fill of the collapsed walls of the platform. Since the west retaining walls were the tallest straight faces, they were the most unstable and the deposition of "fill" artifacts was greatest in this area. The floors of both the superstructure and the platform sloped east to west facilitating water drainage and the movement of artifacts in that direction.

A very high concentration of ceremonial refuse lay south of the first terrace centered on grid 896N, 314E. Items in this area include bone (Figure 8-11) and shell, perhaps from feasting, Chipotle Red sherds (occasionally used as cache vessels), sherds of most censer types, three human teeth (Figure 8-12), obsidian blades, and corner-notched points. Exotic ceremonial artifacts in this area include a stingray spine, a grasping crustacean pincer, and several fragments of an extremely large conch shell. As mentioned, conch shells are used by the Lacandon to call the gods to the god house (McGee 1990: 53). This area appears to have been a secondary deposit of ceremonial refuse, perhaps from sweeping activities and cache terminations such as were located on the north side of Str. 602.

Several artifact types were concentrated inside and outside the superstructure. One example is the distribution of chert bifaces (Figure 8-13). In the entire excavation, 0.06 chert bifaces per m<sup>2</sup> were recovered as opposed to 0.11 per m<sup>2</sup> in the superstructure, hence bifaces were more common in the superstructure. Miscellaneous and uncommon bone and shell (Figure 8-12), on the other hand, was almost totally absent from the superstructure and the frequency of miscellaneous ceramics was relatively low as well.

Human and animal teeth are very frequent on the platform and may have been offerings inappropriate for the superstructure. A concentration of miscellaneous shell and ceramics is apparent on the altar; however, the fill of this feature was excavated a bit deep in one of the units, perhaps accounting for this anomaly. Most artifact types were more heavily concentrated outside the superstructure, suggesting the use of the interior was limited to specific activities.

Censers tended to be concentrated west of the interior altar extending out of the superstructure onto the third terrace. *Idolos* and *Pitufo Modeled* censers deviated from this rule, and these sherds were found in very low frequencies scattered through the excavated area. At least 14 non-effigy censer vessels, many nearly complete, were recovered from Str. 764. The six identified *Mumul Composite* censers were concentrated between the fourth and fifth columns from the north. The seven identified *Gotas Composite* censers were concentrated around the fourth and fifth columns and 2 m west of the third column. The single discernible *Fijate Composite* vessel was located east of the fourth column. *La Justa/Extranjeras Composite* censer sherds could not be grouped into discrete identifiable vessels.

*Patojo var. Patojo Modeled* censer sherds were found west of the interior altar, but within the larger deposit were two areas of heavy concentrations (Figure 8-14). One concentration was located along the medial axis of the structure, adjacent to the western side of the altar. The other concentration was found just west of the fourth and fifth columns. Pairing could not be discerned in the distribution of the *Patojo modeled* censer sherds and the vessels appear to have been smashed and partially scattered. This concentration included 14 vessels. Most of the deity effigies were male, but one depicted

with a *huipil* appears to have been female. Several probable Chak effigies were present as were at least two of a deity with lightning bolts or locks of hair running adjacent to the eyes down the checks similar to the specimen recovered from Structure 602. A great number of both effigy and non-effigy censers were found smashed around the fifth column. It is possible that the vessels were intentionally destroyed or stored in this area.

The area east of the interior altar was clean of most artifacts, including censers, with the exception of a few unique artifacts. The sherds of a Tirso Red ceramic drum, decorated with cross motifs, were concentrated upon the east side of the medial altar along the medial axis (Figure 8-15). A sherd from a whistle/flute was found near the drum. A second interesting Tirso Red artifact was a polychrome quincunx chalice composed of a large central cup to which were attached four small cups. Each of the attachments between the large vessel and small cups is hollow so that liquid would pass from one to another. Several sherds from a second such vessel were spread around the interior of the superstructure. Similar vessels were found in Str. 602. They were also found at Mayapán and called “candlestick clusters” because some of the cups were burned (Thompson 1954: 75; Smith 1971: Figures 37 and 75). While similar, the quincunx vessels in Str. 764 do not appear to have been candelabras because of their hollow connections and lack of charring. Instead, they may have been used for ceremonial drinking. A complete miniature cup was found just west of the altar (Figure 8-16). A sherd from another cup, which may have once rested upon the altar, was found in collapse east of the altar. Also within the relatively clean space east of the interior altar was an obsidian core, a relatively uncommon artifact at Zacpetén. Several obsidian blades were found on the altar, but excavations in this area intruded into altar fill.

Several important rare and isolated artifact deposits were recovered in other areas, as well. Half of a large cat mandible (Figure 8-11), probably that of a jaguar given its size, was located on the small altar at the base of the stairs. This artifact was most likely an offering or sacrificial marker displayed in a very prominent place. A carved bird effigy was located just west of the fourth column from the north (Figure 8-16). It was crudely carved of soft limestone and is 25 cm long and 5.22 cm thick. This object may have been tenoned to the column. Two fragments of female effigy figurines or whistles were found behind Str. 764. Part of a chert eccentric was located near one of these figurines and another on the south bench. The former chert eccentric may have been cached originally within the medial altar, but eroded out as it deteriorated. Two small quartz crystals were found on the south bench. On the northwest edge of the platform were two spindle whorls near an animal claw or talon.

In sum, several important activities area can be identified in Str. 764. First, there is the area east of the interior altar, which contained musical instruments and cups and was otherwise devoid of activity. Second, the area immediately west of the interior altar contained numerous censers. Here, the deities on the censers would have been visible to those in the plaza, unless the entrance was covered, and offerings of incense were made to these deities in their attached vessels and independent spiked censers. The numerous god pots mark this building as a multiple god-house. It is interesting that there were 14 Patojo Modeled and 14 non-effigy censers. This correlation could be the result of coincidence, but it is also possible each god pot may have had a corresponding non-effigy censer. Nevertheless, each vessel was smashed and its sherds scattered preventing the identification of matching sets. Third is the small altar at the base of the stairway that

held the large cat mandible offering. Finally, a concentration of ceremonial refuse was found against the south wall of the platform.

### Str. 1002

Str. 1002 lies adjacent to the north or right side of Str. 764, also facing west and in the position of an oratorio in a Mayapán temple assemblage, but it has no extant masonry superstructure. A 37-m<sup>2</sup> area was excavated on the southern portion and to the rear (east) of Str. 1002, uncovering approximately 15% of the building.

Very little is known of Str. 1002 because only a small portion of the platform was excavated. The project simply did not have the time or resources to clear the entire structure and most of the platform surface was an exposed outcrop of bedrock suggesting few in situ deposits. Excavations were concentrated to the rear of the structure in hope that refuse materials to date construction would be recovered. The surface of the platform is not entirely flat, but interrupted by several low and smooth projections of bedrock. The highest part of the platform lies 1.73 m above the plaza. The western edge was faced by a masonry wall of which only the lower course of hard limestone blocks remains. At the rear of the platform, approximately 2 m northeast of the northeast corner of Str. 764, were found two postholes aligned north/ south cut into the bedrock outcrop. These two postholes may have been part of a series that defined the eastern edge of Str. 1002; however, the bedrock had eroded, destroying its northern extent.

No notable deposits were found in the units excavated on and behind Str. 1002. Artifacts recovered included miscellaneous ceramics, chert debitage/flakes, and a low frequency of censer sherds.

### Str. 765

Str. 765 is located in the northwest corner of Group C, approximately 9.3 m north of Str. 766 (Figure 8-1). This building is a raised shrine composed of a low asymmetrical platform with a small rectangular superstructure facing due south (Figure 8-17 and 8-18). While raised shrines are part of the typical Mayapán temple assemblage, this building is not in the proper position to be part of the archetypical assemblage. It is, however, in the proper position for the Petén variant of the temple assemblage. An 81-m<sup>2</sup> area covering 100% of Str. 765 was excavated.

#### Architectural Composition of Str. 765

The platform of Str. 765 had a single low terrace with no stairway. Its edges were faced by vertical slabs. The superstructure of Str. 765 is a rectangular structure facing to the south enclosed by very thin walls. The single entrance to the superstructure is only 0.80 m wide. The floor of the superstructure is flush with that of the platform, but is capped by a preserved plaster surface. Against the rear (northern) wall of the superstructure lays a small medial altar. Just southeast of the altar is a circular charred area on the plaster where an offering was likely burned.

The superstructure of Str. 765 was tested in search of burials and caches. The one test pit into the medial altar revealed a thin plaster floor 0.2 to 0.3 m below the top of the altar. Since this floor was level with the floor inside the superstructure, it appears that the altar was a later addition to the shrine. No other evidence of previous constructions of the shrine or plaza was encountered within the test units, which encountered bedrock 0.87 to 1.10 m below the plaster surface of the superstructure.

### Artifact Distributions of Str. 765 and the Northern Stairway

For the most part, chert debitage and flakes, obsidian blades, and miscellaneous ceramics, bone, and shell in Str. 765 and the northern stairway were concentrated near walls, suggesting inclusion in wall and platform fill. Within the superstructure of Str. 765 were encountered a pair of Gotas Composite Censers to the south of the altar (Figure 8-19). The sherds from one (Vessel 1) were spread out across the interior. The other (Vessel 2) was concentrated in the southeast corner of the superstructure above the circular burn spot on the floor. At least two Mumul Composite censers were encountered (Figure 8-20), but the vessels were much less complete than the Gotas vessels. The sherds of part of one Mumul vessel (Vessel 3) were concentrated in the southeast corner of the superstructure above the charred portion of floor, and the other vessel(s) were deposited west of the northwest corner of the platform. Some La Justa/ Extranjeras censer sherds were found in the superstructure, but no clear patterns were observed in the distribution of these artifacts. Patojo and Idolos Modeled censer sherds were low in frequency and distributed without a clear pattern.

An interesting artifact within the interior of the superstructure was an oval-shaped offering dish found to the west of the altar (Figure 8-16). This bowl was made of the sherd of a large Chilo Unslipped jar. This artifact might have been categorized simply as miscellaneous ceramic sherds had similar artifacts not been encountered in Str. 721. It is possible that the sherds of Vessel 3, because they represent only a portion of the vessel, mentioned above, may represent another such offering dish.

Two concentrations of human remains were found on or near Str. 765. At the southern end of the platform were found part of a human mandible and three human teeth

(Figure 8-12). Located near the human remains are two animal teeth---the only such artifacts found on Str. 765. The human and animal teeth seem to be platform offerings similar to those in Str. 764. On the slope off the edge of the plaza to the west of the northeast corner of Str. 765 was found a concentration of human long bones (Burial 765-1) (Figure 8-21). The remains included at least two individuals, an adult and a child. These remains included an adult's right tibia, fibula, right scapula, clavicle, two radii, and a child's left humerus, right femur, left femur, and tibia. The remains were stacked parallel to one another, generally oriented north/south indicative of secondary or perhaps tertiary burial.

#### Str. 766

Str. 766 is located immediately west of the base of the western stairway of Str. 764 (Figure 8-1). The excavations revealed that it, like Str. 607, its counterpart in Group A, is comprised of two buildings: Str. 766A and Str. 766B (Figure 8-22, 8-25, and 8-26). On the former structure were two or three small altars; therefore, it is an elongated shrine. It is clearly analogous to Mayapán statue shrines, but its extension along the medial axis is part of the Zacpetén variant of the assemblage. Both Structures 766A and 766B were oriented 2° north of east. Str. 766 was investigated with a 70-m<sup>2</sup> excavation block covering 100% of the building.

#### Architectural Composition of Str. 766A

Str. 766A is the portion of Str. 766 lying closest to the temple stairway. It is not centered upon Str. 764, but lies 1 m south of the medial axis extending from the latter structure. It is a long low platform and the western end of the structure was rounded

because later rectangular constructions had been built adjacent to an earlier round shrine. Vertical slabs, most of which are soft limestone, form the edges of Str. 766. Patches of plaster remain on the surface of the structure, 16 cm above the latest plaza surface. The main body of Str. 766A is a platform upon which were constructed two small masonry rectangles: Fea. 766A-1 and Fea. 766A-2. A third rectangle may lie between the first two

Fea. 766A-1, a 67 by 50 cm masonry rectangle, stood 11 cm above the plaster surface of Str. 766A, 2.95 m west of its west edge. The surface of Fea. 766A-1 does not appear to have been plastered. Several effigy censer sherds were found on top of this feature (see below). Below the feature surface (17 cm) lay Cache 1, a miniature Chilo jar that did not contain non-perishable offerings (Figure 8-25).

The base of the exterior of Fea. 766A-1 was excavated as well. Caches were found to the east and west of the feature. East of Fea. 766A-1 was Cache 2, a lidded jar resting 21 cm below the surface of the structure. Like most lidded cache vessels at Zacpetén, the vessel had two loop handles on its sides and one on the lid. Within the vessel were found several stone objects and a stingray spine (Figure 8-26). These objects were concentrated in a small 4 cm area along the edge of the vessel.

Cache 3 was found 37 cm below the building surface to the west of Fea. 766A-1. This cache included two Chak or Tlalok faces from effigy censers. One was a large sherd decorated with a life-size appliqué Chak/Tlalok face. It probably belonged to a censer, though of a type previously not encountered at Zacpetén. The censer was shaped like a jar rather than the usual hourglass form. The vessel may be related to Central Mexican Tlalok pots used in New Year rites (see Ringle et al. 1998: 216, Fig. 3, and Fig. 29). A censer with a similarly large face was encountered at Santa Rita Corazol (Chase

1985: Fig. 9). The large sherd seems to have been intentionally broken with care in order to preserve the complete face. Directly below this sherd lay the smaller head of another Chak, but this was part of a human figure effigy censer. It is evident that these sherds were intentionally cached. The low frequency of censer heads in the temples suggests that they were being removed for other purposes. Their presence in a cache indicates that they may have had some sort of residual supernatural value even when incense was not burning in them. The burying of deities masks, specifically those of God C, have been identified in Maya codices (Vail 2000: 128).

Fea. 766A-2 is located 1.3 m west of Fea. 766A-1 and was centered upon Str. 766. The feature is a rectangular stone box of soft dressed limestone vertical slabs set in a single course. It measures 55 by 65 cm though it was probably once square as the latter dimension was distorted by root disturbance. Fea. 766A-2 stood 10 cm above the surface of the Str. 766 and does not appear to have been covered with plaster. Excavations into the fill encountered a previous construction of the feature, described below.

The surface of Str. 766 on the exterior of Fea. 766A-2 was excavated and Cache 4, a Chompoxté Red-on-cream var. Akalché polychrome tripod plate, was encountered east of the feature and 30 cm below the platform surface (Figure 8-25). The vessel was inverted and centered upon Fea. 766A-2. No artifacts were found beneath the vessel.

#### Previous Constructions of Str. 766A

Lying 10 cm below the latest surface of Str. 766A was its first construction (Figure 8-27). The stones tended to be slightly smaller those of the second construction and only 30% were soft limestone. They were set as vertical slabs. A preserved portion of the plaza surface (Floor 2) associated with the primary construction of Str. 766A lies

adjacent to the south face, 12 cm below the latest plaza surface. This is the same surface as Floor 2 discerned in Test Pit 892, 296 (Figure 8-2). Portions of the earlier version of the shrine were covered by a relatively well-preserved plaster surface that lies 10 cm above the third plaza surface (Floor 2). Carbonized incense was encountered on top of the structure. The western edge of the earlier shrine was constructed adjacent to a still earlier circular platform (Fea. 766A-3).

Within the bounds of the first construction of Str. 766A and below Fea. 766A-2 is an earlier construction of the latter feature (Figure 8-29) that obviously preceded Str. 766A-1st. The primary construction of Fea. 766A-2 is a two tiered rectangular masonry box. It is comprised of small rubble coursed blocks, 50% of which are soft limestone. At the base of the feature, lies the second plaza floor (Floor 3), which was also associated the primary construction of Str. 766A-3. The primary construction of Fea. 766A-2 measures 45 by 62.5 cm and stands 37 cm high. No special deposits were encountered within the feature.

Lying in situ upon the second plaza surface, 24 cm west of the primary construction of Fea. 766A-2 was Cache 5, an adult human mandible (Figure 8-25). Similar deposits were found near Structure 607B, and in Op. 1001. This artifact could have associated with the primary construction of Fea. 766A-2 or a later cache.

Fea. 766A-3 is the circular platform against the east side of which the primary and secondary constructions of Str. 766A were built (Figure 8-22 and 8-27). Most of this structure is covered with a thick coat of stucco, therefore, the masonry style was difficult to discern, but it appears to have be composed of small coursed rubble, 20% of which is soft limestone. The feature was constructed in a wedding cake-shape with three extant

tiers. The second plaza surface (Floor 3) lies at the base of the first tier (Figure 8-24). This surface is the same as that encountered west of the primary construction of Fea. 766A-2. Excavations into the fill of Fea. 766A-3 did not reveal special any deposits. While this wedding cake-shaped altar seems odd, it is not an unique form. The Codex Dresden depicts at least two similar altars both in association with human sacrifice (Villacorta and Villacorta 1930: 78-95). A nearly identical though slightly larger altar was found at Uaxactun, but dates to the Early Classic period and may have been associated with ballcourt rituals (Valdés and Fahsen 1995: 203). A similar altar was found in front of Temple 45 at Tulum, but it had rectangular terraces with a circular “bowl” on top (Lothrop 1924: 112). A fourth feature may be located midway between Fea. 766A-1 and 766A-2 (Figure 8-22). It is a masonry rectangle standing 10 to 12 cm tall. If this were a feature, it was superficial and did not have associated artifacts.

Test Unit 904, 299 demonstrates that bedrock below Str. 766 was not very deep (Figure 8-28). The highest cultural stratum in the test pit is the floor of Str. 766A-I, the first construction of the building. Beneath this floor is a Late Postclassic Fill (Level 3), which rests upon a Terminal Classic fill (Level 4). Directly below the latter fill is a plaster surface (Level 5) corresponding with Floor 3 in Test Unit 892, 296 of Str. 767 (Figure 8-2). This surface was built upon a Late Postclassic fill event (Level 6).

#### Architectural Composition of Str. 766B

Str. 766B lies 65 cm west of Fea. 766A-3, in direct line with Str. 766A (Figure 8-23). The structure is composed of limestone rubble, all of which is hard, set as vertical slabs. The rectangle formed by the stones is bisected (north/south) by an additional line of large limestone rubble set as blocks. It is likely that the eastern portion of Str. 766B

was a 1.8 x 0.5 m addition onto an earlier 1.8 x 1.0 m construction. No special deposits or earlier constructions were buried within the structure or beneath it to a depth of 46 cm below the plaza surface.

#### Artifact Distributions of Str. 766 (A and B)

The frequency of non-effigy censer sherds was very low, but they were concentrated south of Str. 766. A moderate concentration of Patojo Modeled censer sherds was on the southeast corner of Str. 766A (Figure 8-14). A light scatter of Patojo Modeled censer sherds was on top of and to the south of Fea. 766A-1 and could have been associated with the small cache vessel or the cached sherds with Chak effigies. Another light scatter of Patojo Modeled censer sherds was encountered east and south of Fea. 766A-2. Part of this concentration lay above Cache 4, containing a Chompoxté Red-on-cream polychrome tripod plate.

Most non-ceramic artifacts are distributed to the south of Str. 766, but without clear patterns. However, the distribution of miscellaneous ceramics, bone, shell, and lithic flakes (Figure 8-29) were patterned. All were distributed similarly, with concentrations on the west end of Fea. 766A-3, south of Fea. 766A-2, southeast of 766A-1, and on the west side of Str. 766B. Bone, shell, lithic flakes, and miscellaneous ceramics are often found in architectural fill, concentrated adjacent to collapsed walls. These concentrations may have resulted from the deterioration of the masonry of Fea. 766A-1 to -3 and 766B. One problem with this interpretation is that most of this debris lies south of Str. 766, suggesting intentional deposition rather than random deterioration. A combination of sweeping refuse to the south and gradual masonry deterioration may account for this pattern.

Most artifact types with relatively high frequencies were concentrated to the south of Str. 766; however, such was not the case with obsidian blades (Figure 8-30). These artifacts were concentrated northeast of Str. 766B (or northwest of Str. 766A-3), northwest of Fea. 766A-2, and northwest of Str. 766A-1. Obsidian blades are found in fill, but not with the regularity of bone, shell, lithic flakes, and miscellaneous ceramics. Given that artifacts generally found in fill and secondary refuse such as swept censer sherds were concentrated to the south of Str. 766, the obsidian blades could be primary refuse. They may have been involved in bloodletting ceremonies related to the various altars of Str. 766.

One interesting unique artifact was a small lead ball found south of Str. 766 (Figure 8-16). This object is 1.02 cm in diameter and is partially deformed by either striking or being struck by another object. Its size suggests it was likely a bullet from either a pistol or a trade rifle. Found near the lead ball were a fragment of hematite, a crystal, a spindle whorl, and a crustacean pincer (Figure 8-12). As mentioned, the former two objects were used for divination, and spindle whorls are suspiciously frequent in central ritual features. It is possible that the lead ball had become attributed with supernatural power, like hematite and crystals.

Several pieces of human bone and teeth (Figure 8-12) were found on the plaza around Str. 766B. This concentration included cranial, maxilla, and unidentified bone fragments, and several teeth. These remains may have been offerings or evidence of dismemberment. Human remains were also found beneath the plaza surface near Str. 766B. At the northeast corner of the structure was Cache 6, which included 32 human teeth and numerous fragments of bone including two articulated vertebrae (Figure 8-25).

While the teeth were spread across three units, they may have belonged to the same individual, though an extensive osteological analysis has not yet been conducted.

Located around Str. 766B were a chert knife and two chert biface fragments (Figure 8-13). With such a low frequency, one cannot call this a concentration, but it is noteworthy that objects used for cutting overlapped with human teeth, maxilla, and cranial fragments scattered upon the plaza surface. Three beads were also found upon Str. 766B. As mentioned, beads were also used as offerings.

In sum, the majority of the artifacts of Str. 766 appear to have been swept to the south of the structure. North of the structure was the medial axis of Group C, which was probably an important ritual area cleaned before events, but obsidian blades were found in this area. Patojo Modeled censer sherds, bone, shell, and lithic flakes were concentrated south of Fea. 766A-1 and 766A-2, suggesting that these were focal activity areas. Another concentration of exotic artifacts south of Fea. 766A-1 includes artifacts that may have been objects with supernatural power. Finally, several human teeth and bones were found around Str. 766B suggesting mortuary or sacrificial behavior.

#### Str. 767 and Str. 1003

Str. 767 is located on the southern side of Group C in the position and form of an open hall in a Mayapán-style temple assemblage (Figure 8-1). It is a C-shaped building facing 8° east of north (Figure 8-31 and 8-32). This is the most poorly constructed hall at Zacpetén as its masonry was the least substantial and its walls the most asymmetrical. The interior appears to have been painted red, and four masonry rectangles/ altars lay in its western half. North of the east side of Str. 767 is Str. 1003, a low platform connecting

Str. 767 and Str. 764. Northwest of Str. 767 is a stairway leading to a lower terrace on the hill upon which Group C was constructed. The vertical datum of Str. 767 is the same as that of Str. 764. A 434-m<sup>2</sup> area covering 100% of Str. 767 was excavated.

#### Architectural Composition of Str. 767

Str. 767 has a C-shaped exterior wall and bench, which were once broken by a medial niche that was later filled. The exterior walls of the building are very poorly preserved. The interior face of the bench is composed of a single face of rubble blocks and vertical slabs. Portions of plaster remain on the bench surface to the west of the medial niche, 0.83 m above the plaza, and 0.36 m above the adjacent floor of the structure. Upon the surviving plaster were found a few small circular burn spots. Furthermore, near the medial niche, portions of red wash were found upon the plaster surface. The medial niche of the bench was once 2.2 m long, but its width is uncertain. The niche faces 7° east of north.

The floor on the interior of the structure was split-level, increasing in height as one moved further into the structure (south). Near the entrance, the remnants of the plaster floor lie 0.25 m above the plaza surface, but adjacent to the bench, they lie 0.47 m above the plaza. In the higher part of the floor were found several circular burn marks.

The entrance to Str. 767 was the entire open northern side of the structure. For the most part, the front retaining wall supporting the floor is composed of rubble vertical slabs, standing 0.25 m high. Unlike Structure 615, no clear column foundations were encountered in Str. 767.

Four masonry rectangles were found in the western half of Str. 767 that are similar to those in Structure 606 and Structure 615. Note that in all three cases, the

rectangles appeared in only one half of the structure. The westernmost masonry rectangle, Fea. 767-1 measures 1.21 by 0.75 m and stands 0.2 m above the floor. No plaster surface was found beneath Fea. 767-1, therefore it was built prior to the construction of the floor of the building. Fea. 767-2 differs from the others because it is larger, does not lie adjacent to the interior rise in the floor, and is oriented with the long axis running north to south. An equivalent feature is not found in Structure 615; however, Feature 606-1 is very similar. Fea. 767-2 measures 1.2 by 2.12 m and stands 0.1 m higher than the floor of the structure. This feature was built after the floor of the structure had been constructed, as beneath it was a reddish-brown washed plaster floor. It was, therefore, constructed after Fea. 767-1 and 767-3. Fea. 767-3 is 1.22 m long, 0.8 m wide, and stands 0.1 m high. The lack of a plaster surface beneath Fea. 767-3 suggests that it was built before the construction of the structure's floor. The easternmost masonry rectangle, Fea. 767-4 was capped by a small tree, but it appears to be 0.8 m wide and 0.25 m high, with the root disturbance increasing the height. The disturbance also eliminated clear evidence demonstrating whether Fea. 767-4 was built before or after the structure's plaster floor.

Three of the four masonry rectangles were constructed in line, including Fea. 767-1, 767-3, and 767-4. These features look similar to columns except for the fact that they only exist in half of the building. Fea. 767-2 was constructed after the others and after the floor of the structure, suggesting at least one major renovation event.

#### Previous Construction of Str. 767

With the exception of Fea. 767-2 and the filling of the medial niche, there is no evidence of a previous construction of Str. 767, but earlier construction stages of the

plaza were encountered. In Test Pit 892, 296 located adjacent to the north side of Fea. 767-1, three earlier plaster surfaces were found beneath that of Str. 767. These floors seem to be earlier plaza surfaces and are described above in the introduction to Group C.

### Str. 1003

Str. 1003 is a low platform lying between Strs. 764 and 767, which delineate its north and south edges, respectively. The eastern side is defined by the eastern edge of the plaza, but the western side is formed by a single course of rubble vertical slabs. A 63-m<sup>2</sup> area covering 100% of Str. 1003 was excavated. No evidence of a superstructure was found upon the platform.

### Artifact Distributions of Str. 767 and Str. 1003

As with the other open halls at Zacpetén, Str. 767 was relatively clean of artifacts. Most artifacts were distributed without a clear pattern. Ceramic sherds, chert debitage and flakes, miscellaneous bone, and shell were associated with the structure's edges and were most likely contained in architectural fill. Unfortunately, no concentrations of artifacts surrounding the masonry rectangles indicate their possible uses.

A concentration of Patojo Modeled (Figure 8-14) and La Justa/Extranjeras censer sherds lies on Str. 1003. Two shell beads, an animal tooth bead, a crystal (Figure 8-16), marine shell fragments (Figure 8-12), and a concentration of miscellaneous bone were also found in this area. These concentrations lay adjacent to a ceremonial refuse heap that lay on the side of Str. 764 and were most likely run-off from this deposit.

Str. 767 continues the association of crystals with colonnaded halls also seen in Structure 606 and Structure 615. Six quartz crystals were found around Str. 767, four of

which lay inside the superstructure. In front of the structure was a piece of a hematite mosaic mirror, an artifact often found in open halls. Another continued trend is the presence of a stone phalli found inside Str. 767. A similar object was found adjacent to Structure 615. Several spindle whorls were also found inside the superstructure.

Adjacent to the medial niche were a couple of chert knife/ lance points or fragments of such points (Figure 8-13). There are three other such objects in and around Str. 767. The two points near the niche would, in any other case, seem inconsequential; however, given that two points were also recovered around the niche of Str. 615.

Within the superstructure, corner-notched points are skewed to the western side of the structure (Figure 8-33). These objects may have been associated with the masonry rectangles, but a clear overlap is not apparent. The west side of Str. 767 is open to the plaza, but the east side faces Str. 764; hence, activities may have been skewed to the west side because of its greater visibility.

Str. 767 differed from the other halls at Zacpetén, from Str. 188 of Nixtun-Ch'ich (Pugh 1996: 216), and from Str. Q-97 of Mayapán because large quantities of ceremonial refuse were not piled against its back walls. On all three sides, the outer walls of the structure were adjacent to the platform edge and it simply may have been difficult to dispose refuse behind it. Another location must have been used for the majority of refuse disposal. Concentrations of miscellaneous bone and shell were found adjacent to the northeast corner of the structure (Figure 8-11). A light concentration of net weights was also found in this area. This was not run-off from the ceremonial refuse of Str. 764 and was most likely a deposit associated with Str. 767, perhaps evidence of ceremonial feasting. This area may have been the refuse dump for the building.

In sum, Str. 767 was relatively clean of artifacts and does not appear to have been a primary location of censer use. Crystals and stone phalli were associated with the structure. The latter have been only found in this building type in Postclassic Petén.

### Group C Summary

The central plaza in Group C appears to have been constructed in the Postclassic period. Terminal Classic strata exist in the base of some test units, but this material may have been brought in as fill from elsewhere. The plaza was built directly upon exposed bedrock some of which was burned by *milpa* or dedication fires. The layout of Group C closely follows the plan for a Mayapán temple assemblage. The central building is a temple medially located on the east side of the plaza and faces west. In front of the temple is Str. 766A, an elongated shrine, placed slightly south of the medial axis of the temple, perhaps to allow access to the latter building. Upon this shrine are two rectangular altars and at its western end is a circular altar. Just west of Str. 766A is Str. 766B, a rectangular masonry altar. At a right angle to and south of the temple is an open hall. To the right and facing in the same direction as the temple is Str. 1002, likely an oratorio. A raised shrine, Str. 765, is located in the northwest corner of the plaza facing into the western side of the open hall toward masonry rectangles within the latter structure. The shifted position of the raised shrine and the elongated shrine define the Petén variant of the temple assemblage. A low platform, Str. 1003, stands between Str. 764 and Str. 767, but its function is unknown.

The temple or god house, Str. 764, stood on the highest platform in Group C and faced to the west. It had a medial altar, interior altar, and L-shaped bench. Upon the

floor on the west side of the structure were numerous large effigy censers, perhaps with matching non-effigy censers. The east side of the building held items used for ritual offerings such as cups, large polychrome quincunx cups, and a red slipped drum. Human and animal teeth on the platform may have been offerings to the platform/mountain/earth.

Str. 1002, the oratorio was constructed on a modified outcrop of bedrock. The superstructure of the building was perishable with posts placed into bedrock. The lack of a masonry superstructure on Str. 1002 differentiates the building from Str. 605 and oratorios at Mayapán. This may suggest oratorios held less significance to the people who built Group C than to those who built Group A. Since the majority of this building was not excavated, little is known of its form or use.

Str. 767 is an open hall with a C-shaped bench and filled-in medial niche. Four low masonry rectangles rest in the western side of the building. The largest of the rectangles appears lined up on the medial axis of Str. 765. Str. 767 was relatively clean but small crystals, spindle whorls, and a limestone phallus were found within it.

A raised shrine, Str. 765, faces into the western part of Str. 767. This building was built upon a low platform. The superstructure is small and contains a medial altar. Within the superstructure were paired non-image censers that appear to have replaced an earlier pair found smashed and scattered around the interior. Just west of this building was a small ossuary containing the remains of an adult and child.

Directly in front of the temple was Str. 766, an elongated shrine with a circular altar at its end. This building contained numerous caches. Associated with the elongated shrine were image censer sherds and obsidian blades. To the west of the circular altar was an independent altar. Around this altar were chert bifaces and human remains.

With the exception of Str. 1002 and 1003, all buildings in Group C exhibit evidence of one major modification. The modification of Str. 766 was correlated with the reconstruction of the plaza surface; hence, the entire group appears to have been reconstructed during a major renovation event. Underneath the temple was an earlier building that also faced west. Instead of an elongated shrine, a circular shrine and a rectangular shrine rested in front of this building.

The number of steps in the northern stairway, western stairway, and stairway of Str. 764 may be significant. There are 20 steps in the northern stairway, an important number in Maya calendrics largely based on a vigesimal number system. Nine steps lead up the stairway on the west of the plaza and Str. 764 has 13 steps. The Maya associated these numbers with the Underworld and heavens, respectively. While one might argue that the number of steps was mere happenstance, the Underworld/heaven opposition associated with the west and east sides of the plaza will become clear in the comparison of Group A and Group C, below.

It appears that each building in Group C was the site of specific, rather than generalized, ritual practices. In other words, each was the place of a different type of performance. Again, these variations in behavior reflect different meaning spaces; therefore, each building type likely had a different meaning to the ritual participants. However, the various spaces do not occur separately, but as a whole temple assemblage, which was essentially a system, structure, or configuration of interrelated themes. The stability of the temple assemblage as a stage of ritual action will become apparent in the comparison of Group A and Group C in Chapter 10.

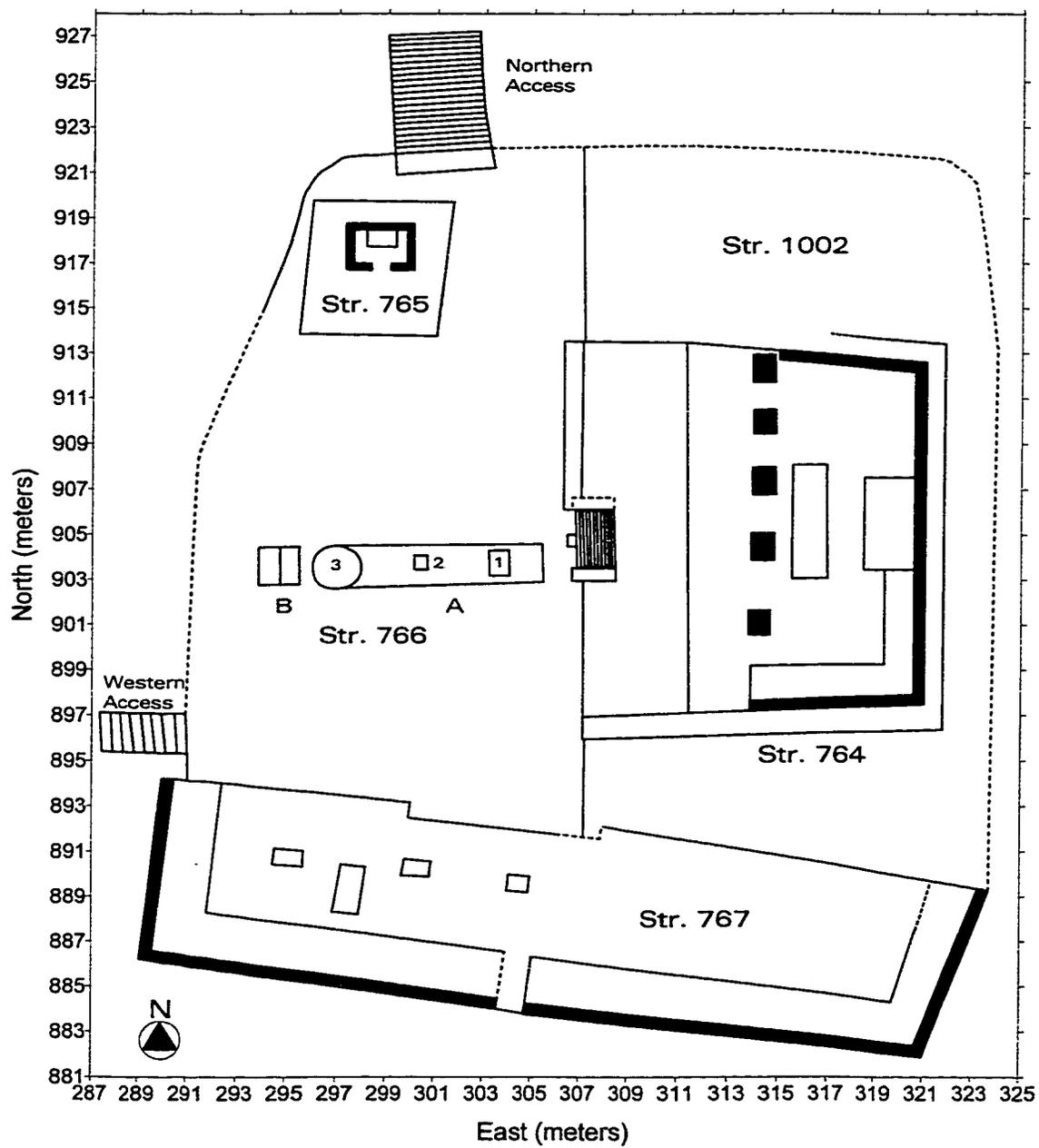


Figure 8-1. Zacpetén, Group C, Ceremonial Area.

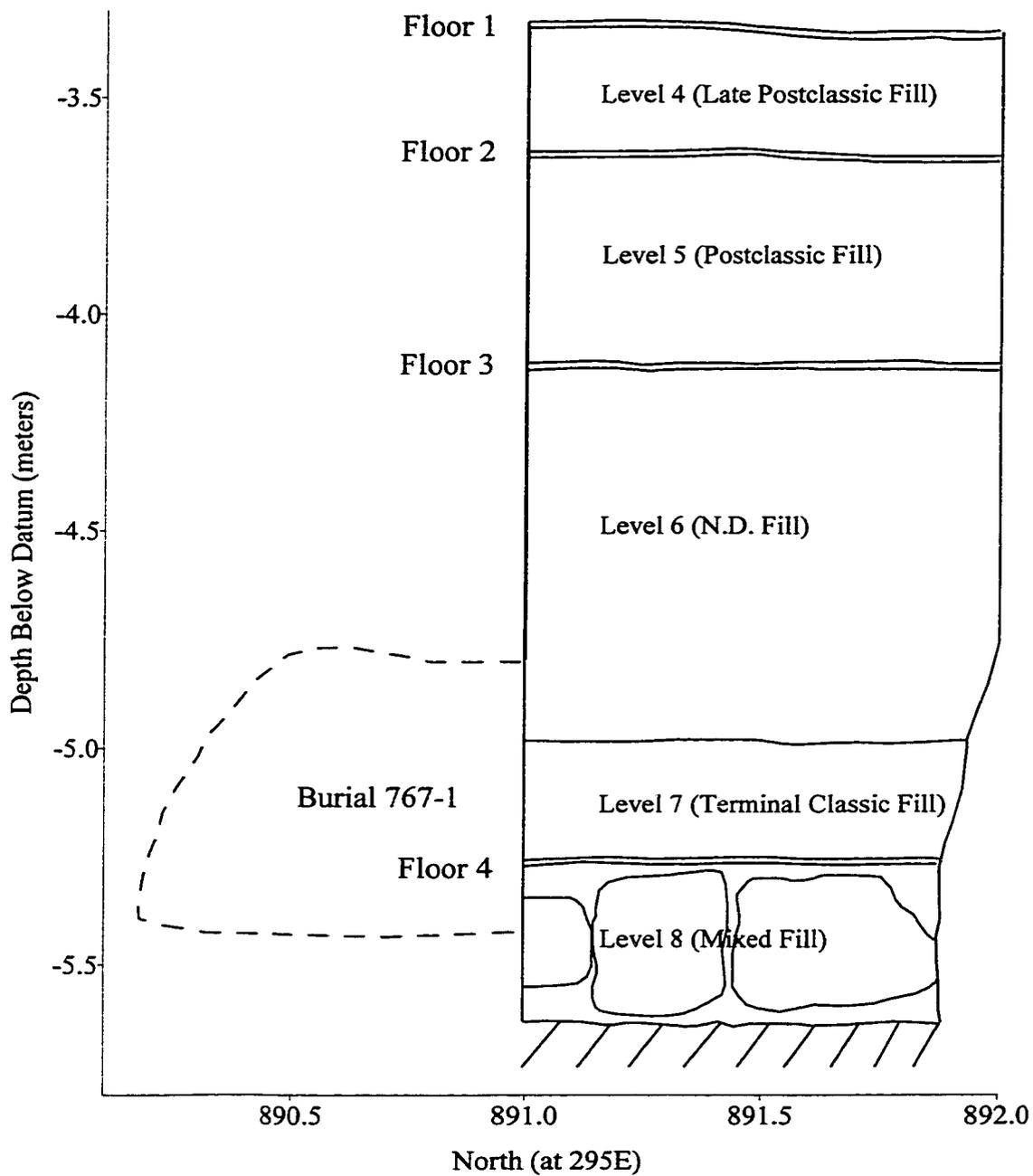


Figure 8-2. Zacpetén, Str. 767, Test Unit 892, 296, West Profile.

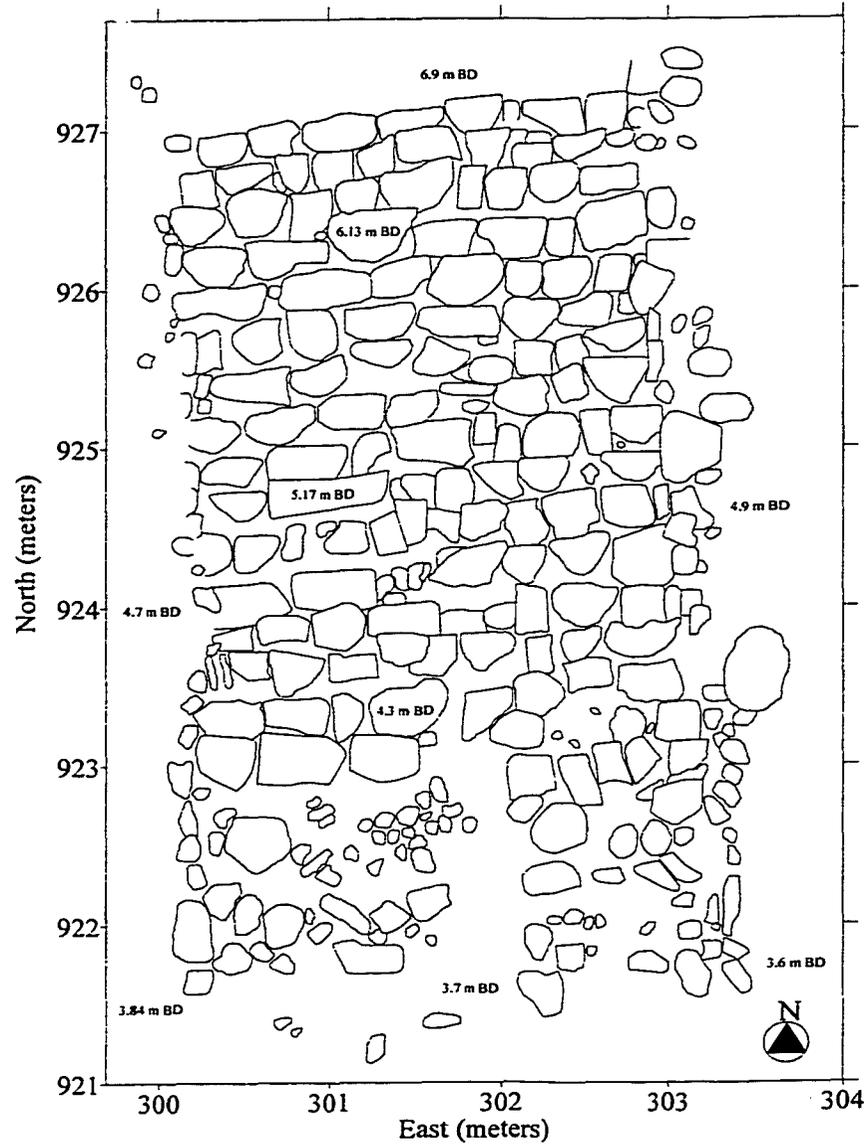


Figure 8-3. Zacpetén, Northern Stairway, Plan of Masonry.

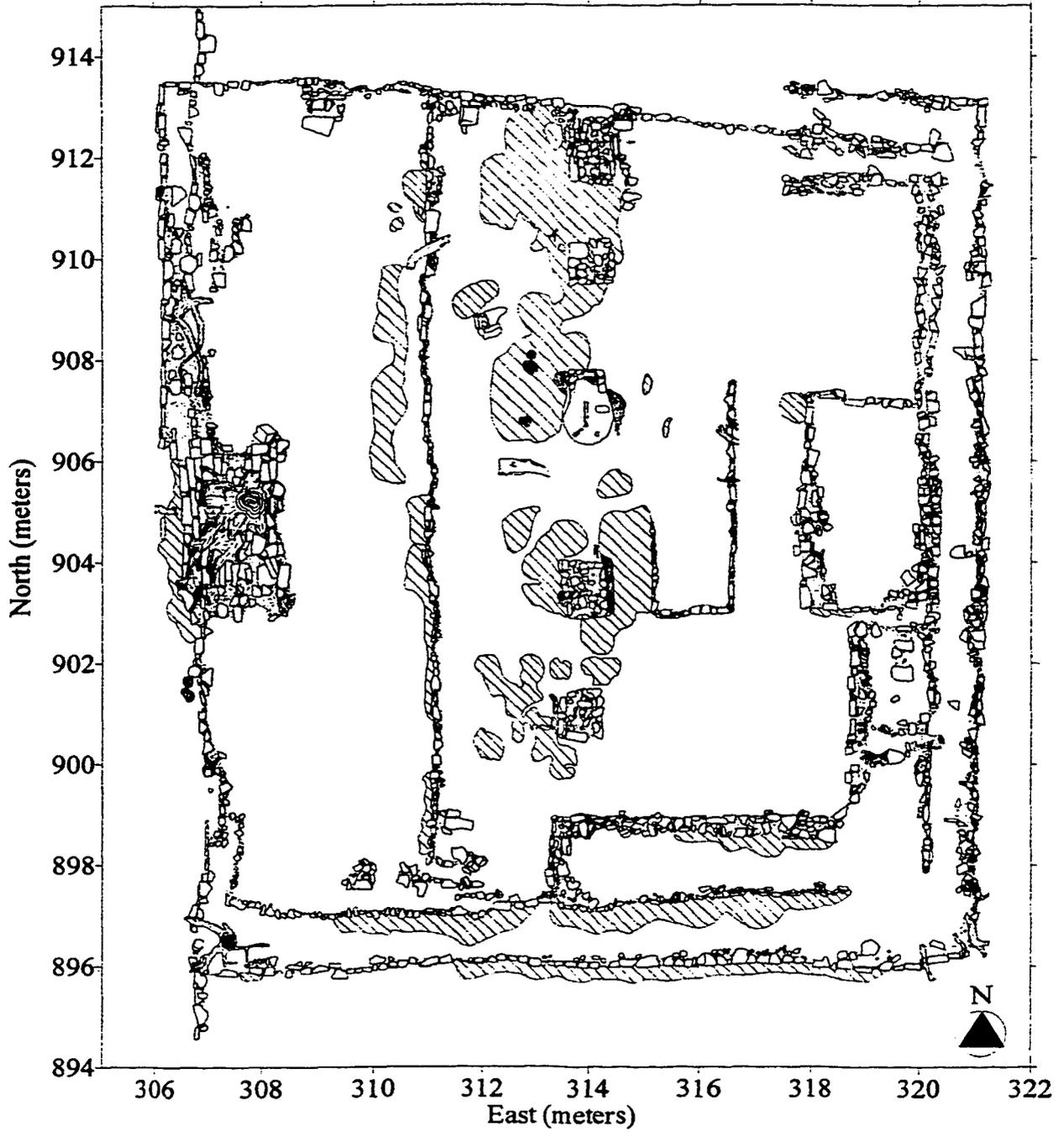


Figure 8-4. Zacpetén, Str. 764, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

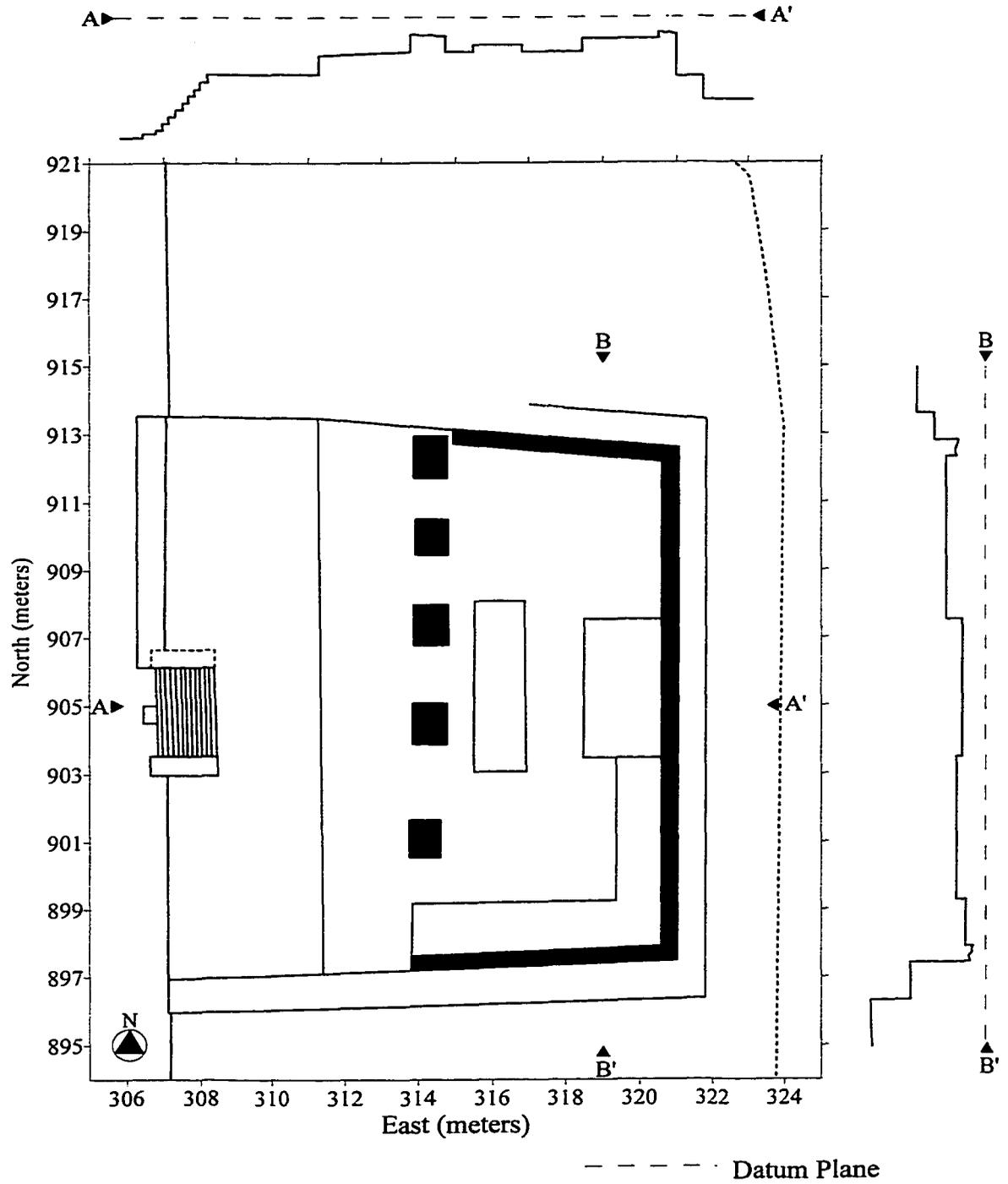


Figure 8-5. Zacpetén, Str. 764, Plan and Cross-Sections.

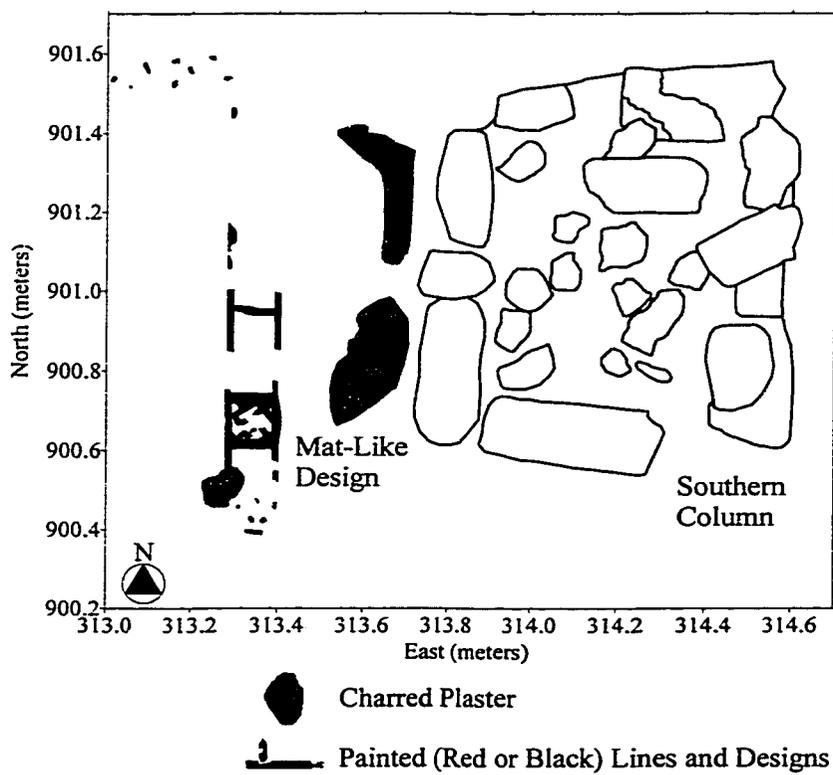
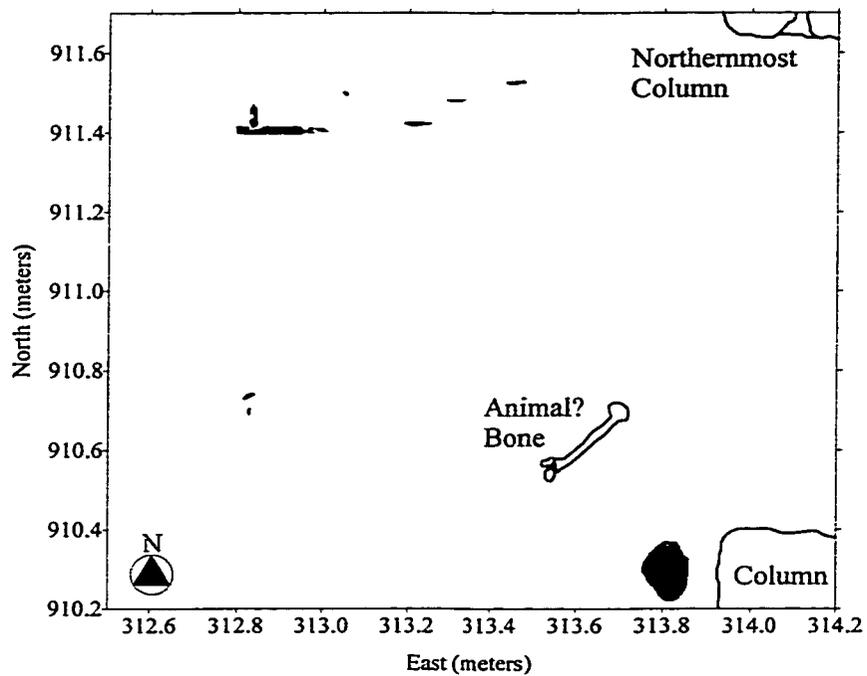


Figure 8-6. Zacpetén, Str. 764, Lines and Designs Painted on the Plaster Floor.

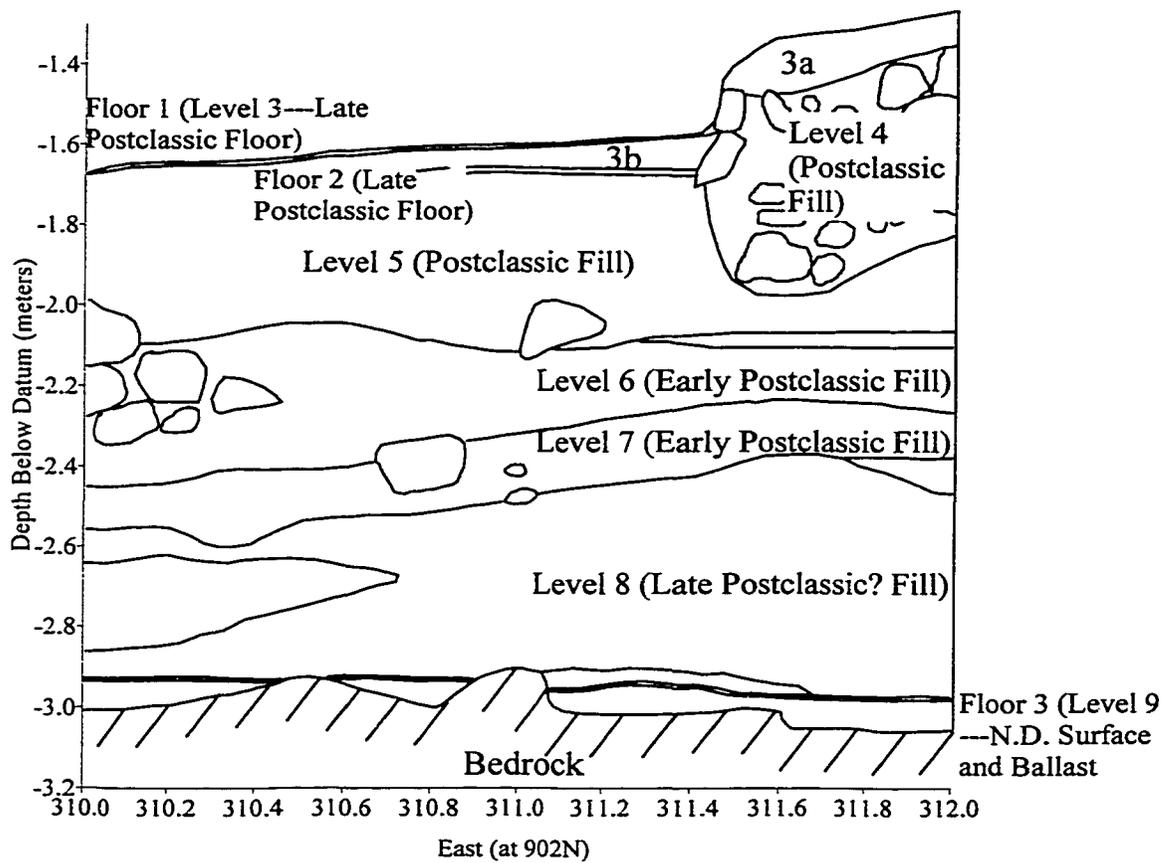
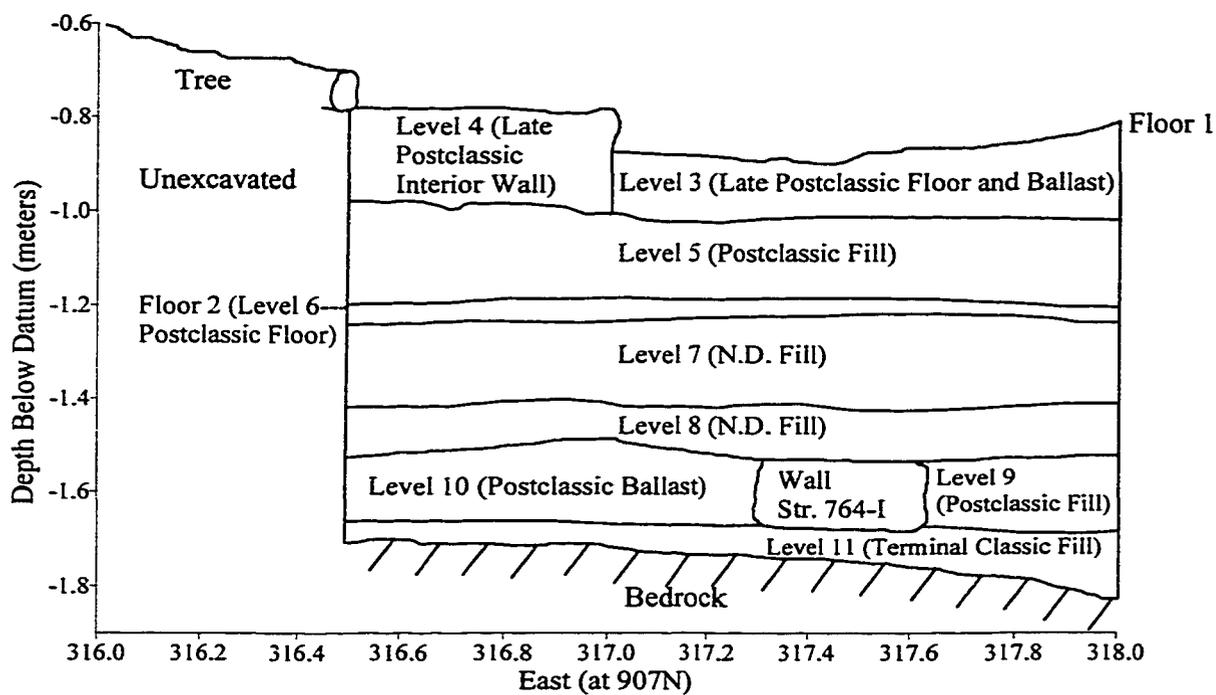
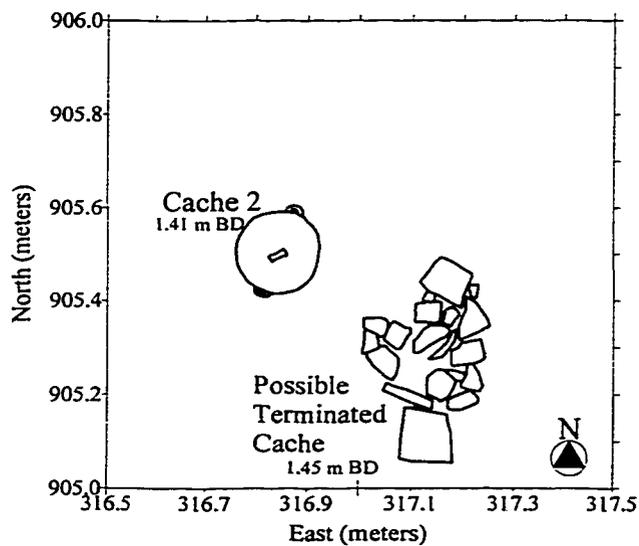


Figure 8-7 Zacpetén, Str. 764, Test Unit 902, 312, North Profile.

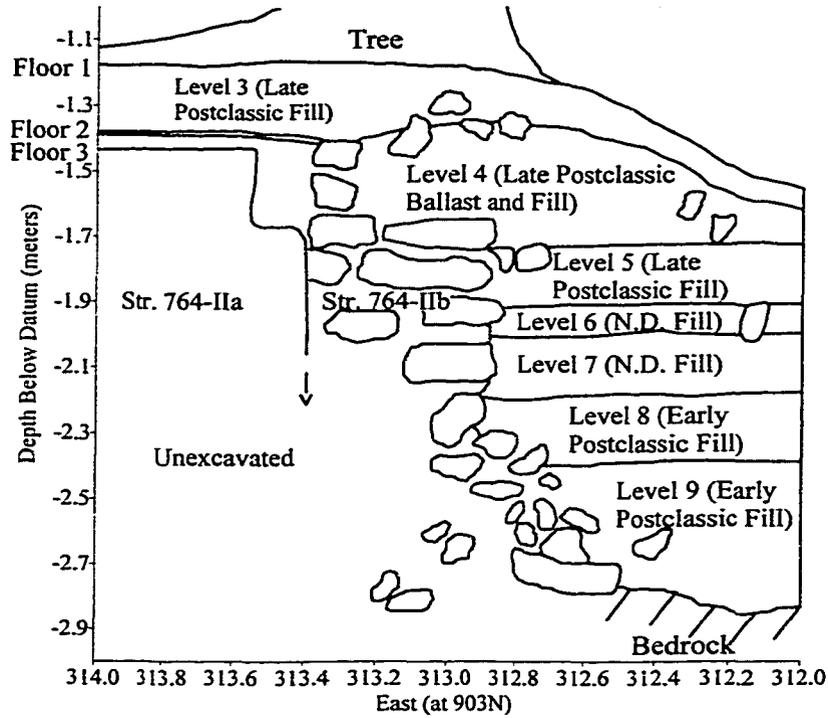


Zacpeten, Str. 764, Test Unit 907. 318, North Profile.

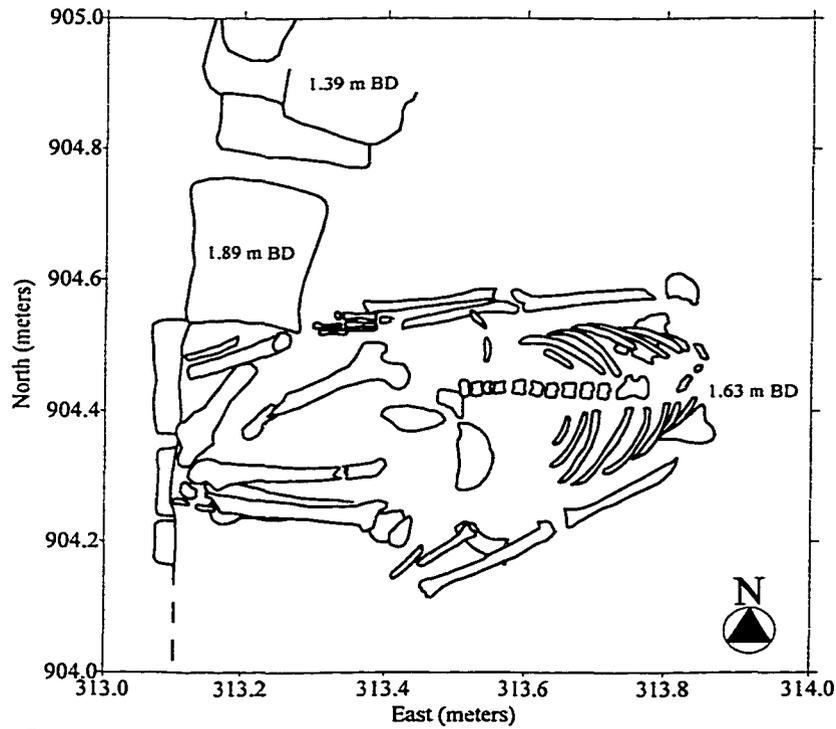


Zacpeten, Str. 764, Test Unit 907. 318, Level 7, Cache 2.

Figure 8-8 Zacpetén, Str. 764, Test Unit 907, 318, North Profile and Cache 2.



Zacpeten, Str. 764, Test Unit 905, 314, South Profile.



Zacpeten, Str. 764, Test Unit 905, 314, Burial 764-1.

Figure 8-9. Zacpetén, Str. 764, Test Unit 902, 312, South Profile and Burial 764-1.



- |                                |                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1- Greenstone Disk/Bead        | 7- Greenstone Mosaic Rectangle   |
| 2- Greenstone Bead             | 8- Red Stone Bead                |
| 3- Red Stone/Shell Bead        | 9- Greenstone Fragment           |
| 4- Coral Fragment              | 10- Ocean Shell Fragment         |
| 5- Greenstone Mosaic Rectangle | 11- Metal (copper) Foil Fragment |
| 6- Ocean Shell Fragment        | 12- Shell Fragment               |

Figure 8-10 Zacpetén, Str. 764, Cache 2, Artifacts within the Cache Vessel.

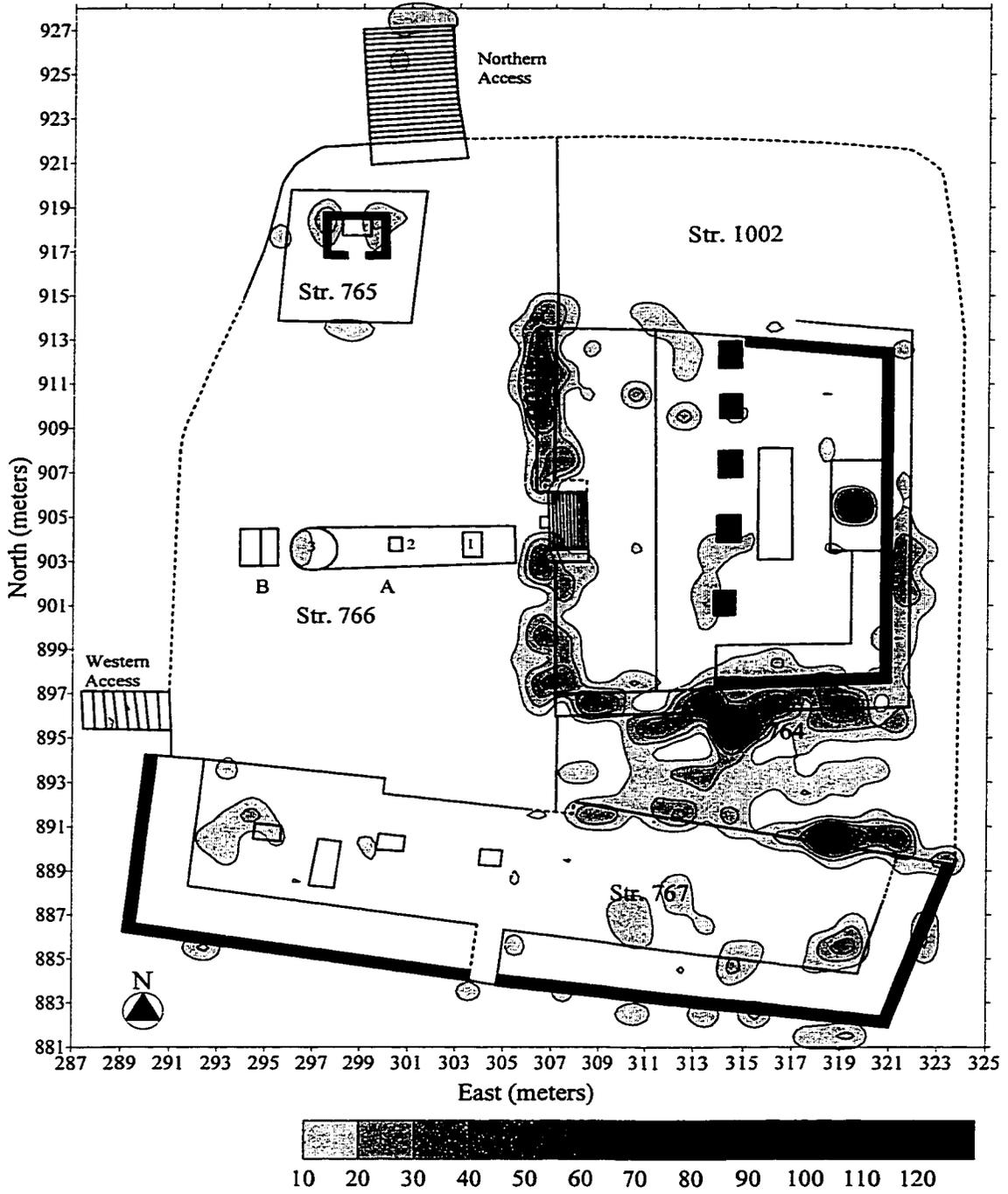


Figure 8-11 Zacpetén, Group C, Miscellaneous Shell.

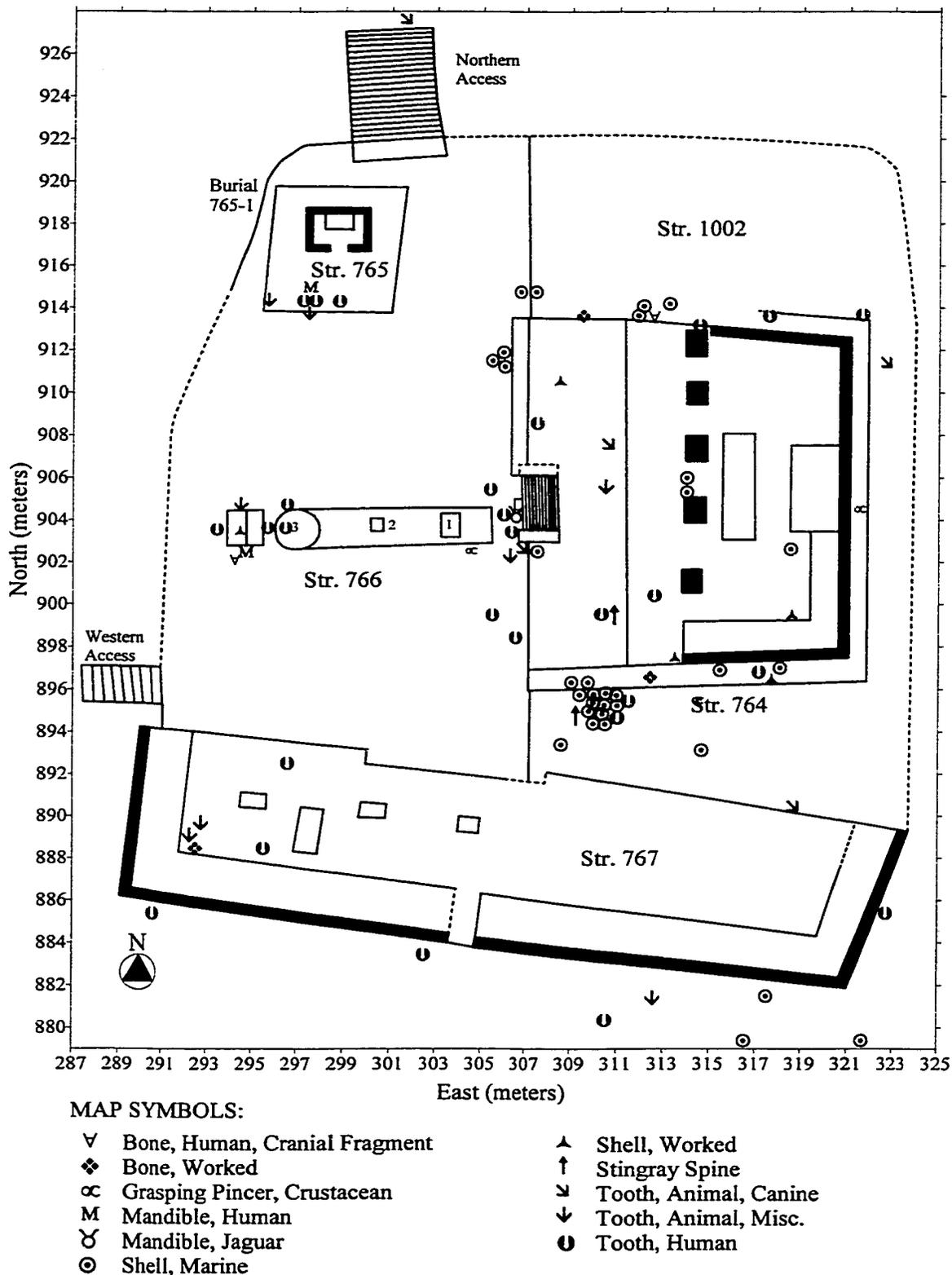


Figure 8-12 Zacpetén, Group C, Uncommon Bone and Shell.

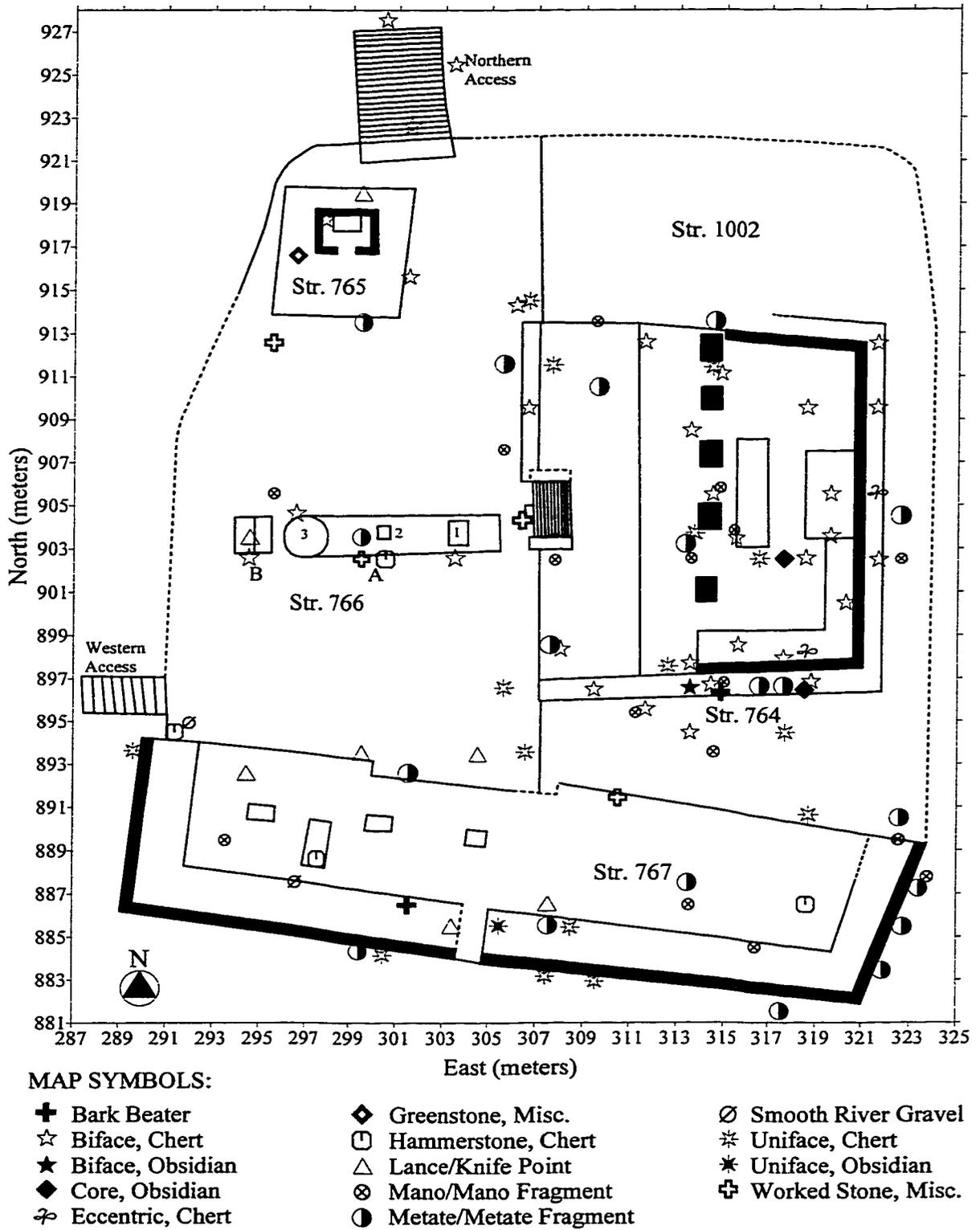


Figure 8-13 Zacpetén, Group C, Uncommon Lithic Artifacts.

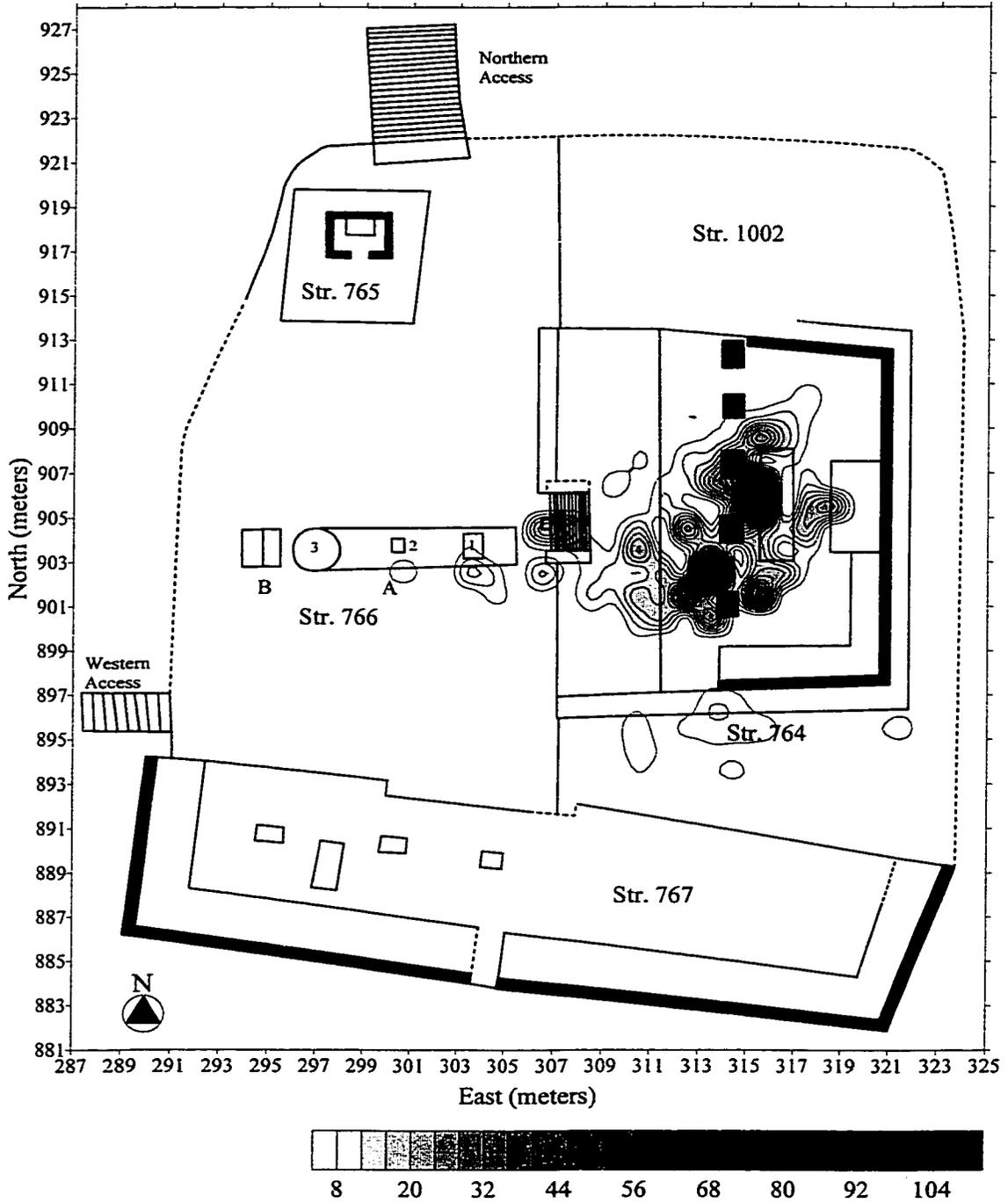


Figure 8-14 Zacpetén, Str. 764, Patojo Modeled Var. Patojo.

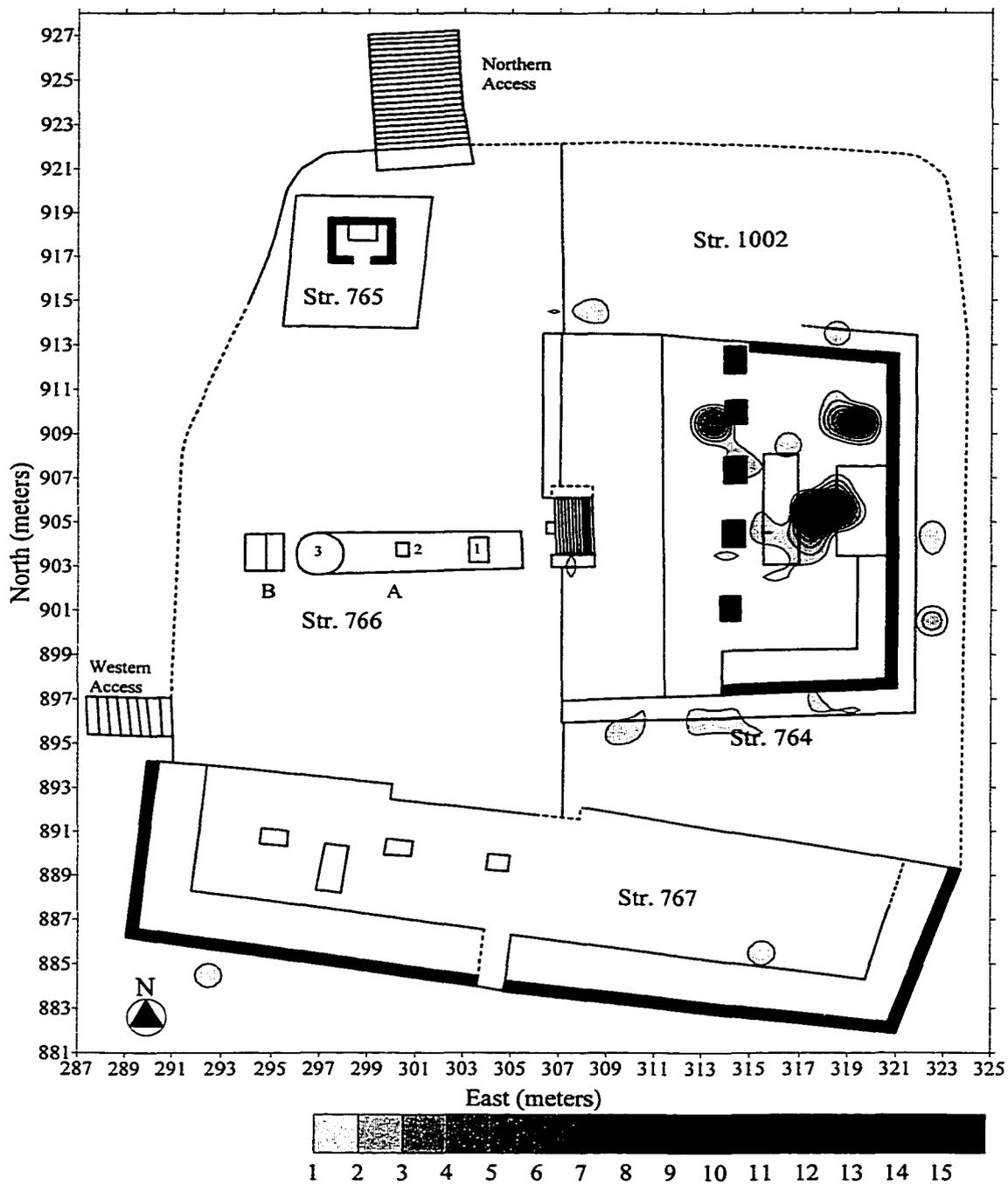


Figure 8-15 Zacpetén, Group C, Tirso Red.

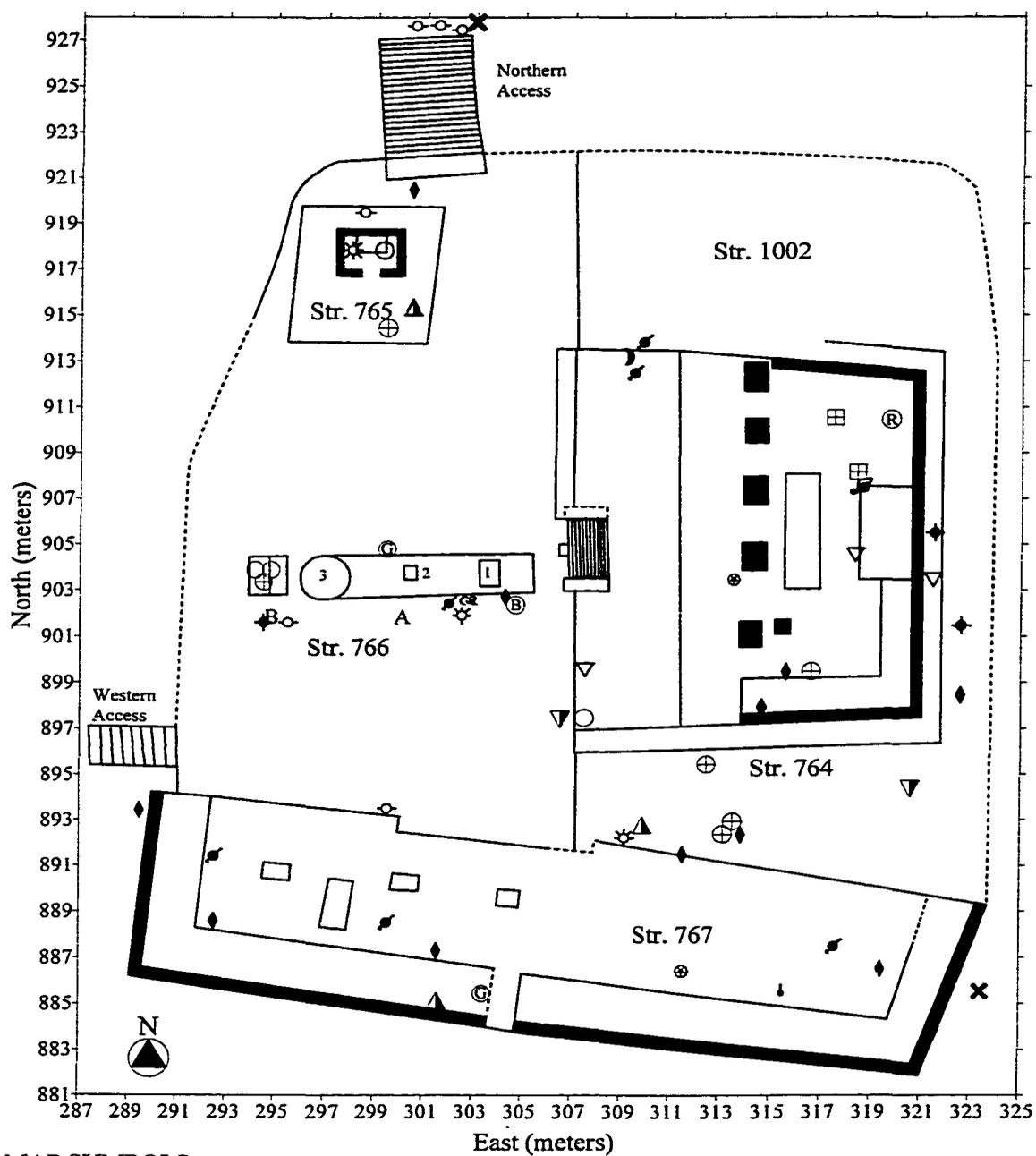


Figure 8-16 Zacpetén, Group C, Miscellaneous Uncommon Artifacts.

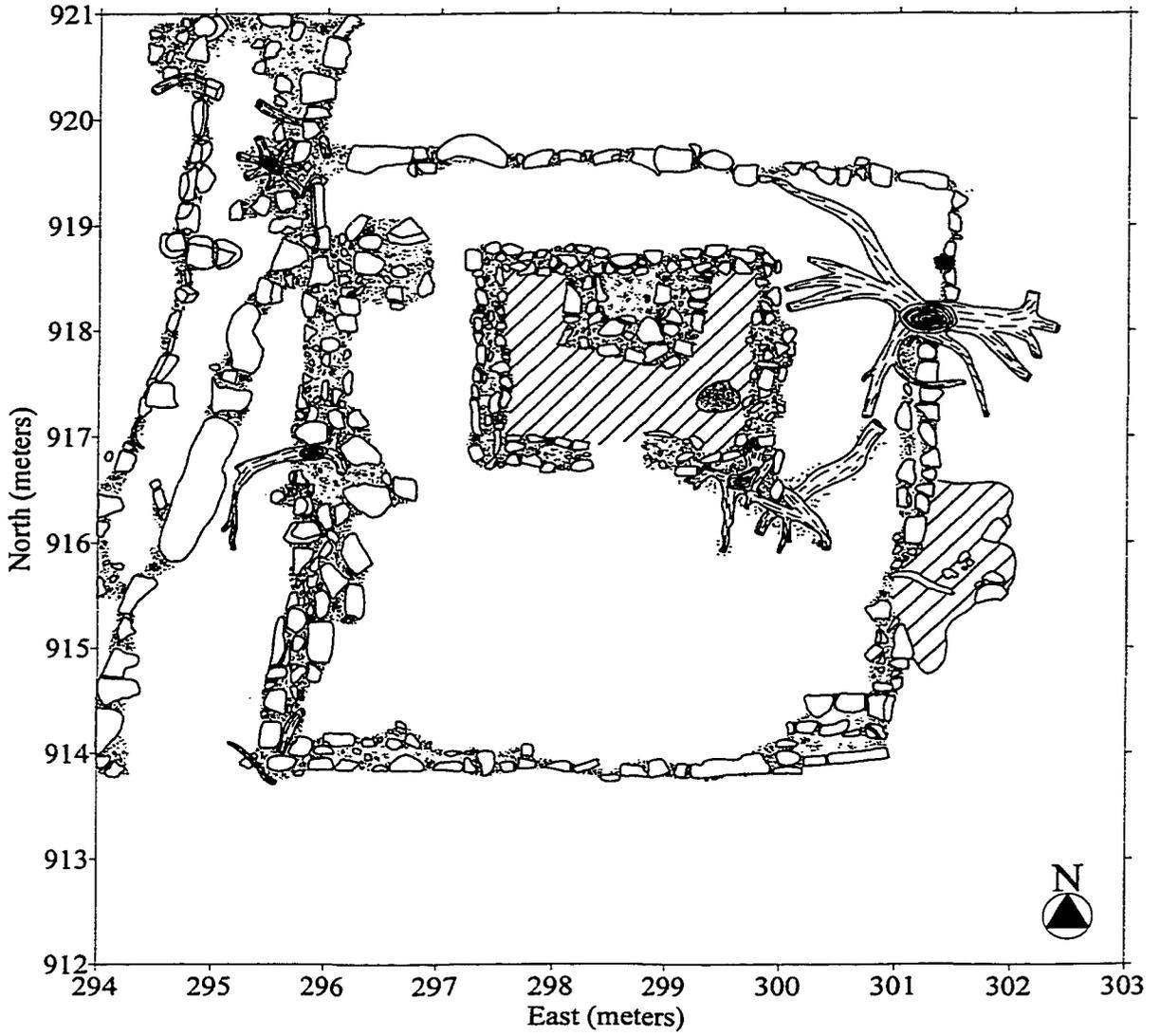


Figure 8-17. Zacpetén, Str. 765, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

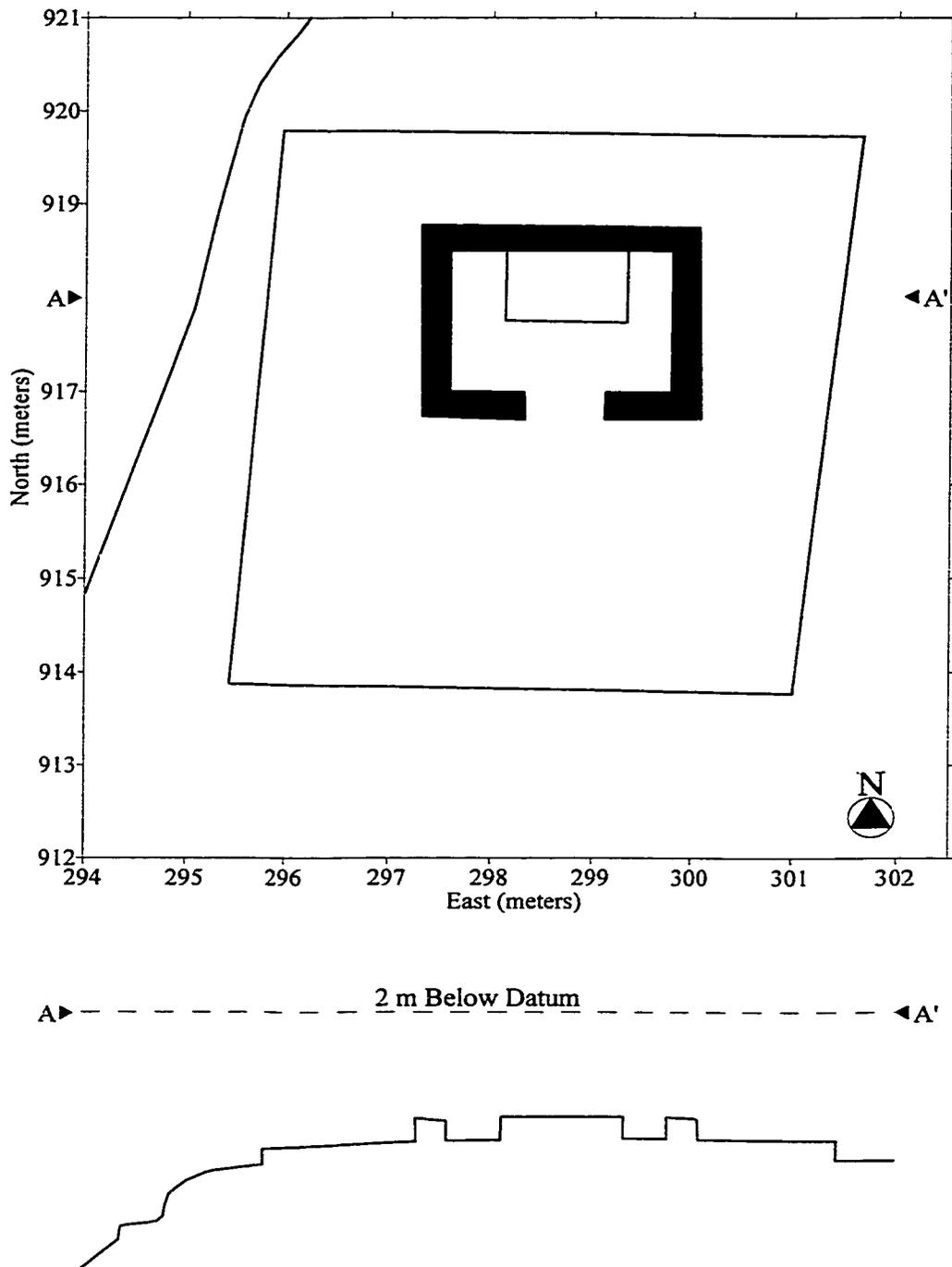


Figure 8-18. Zacpetén, Str. 765, Plan and Cross-Section.

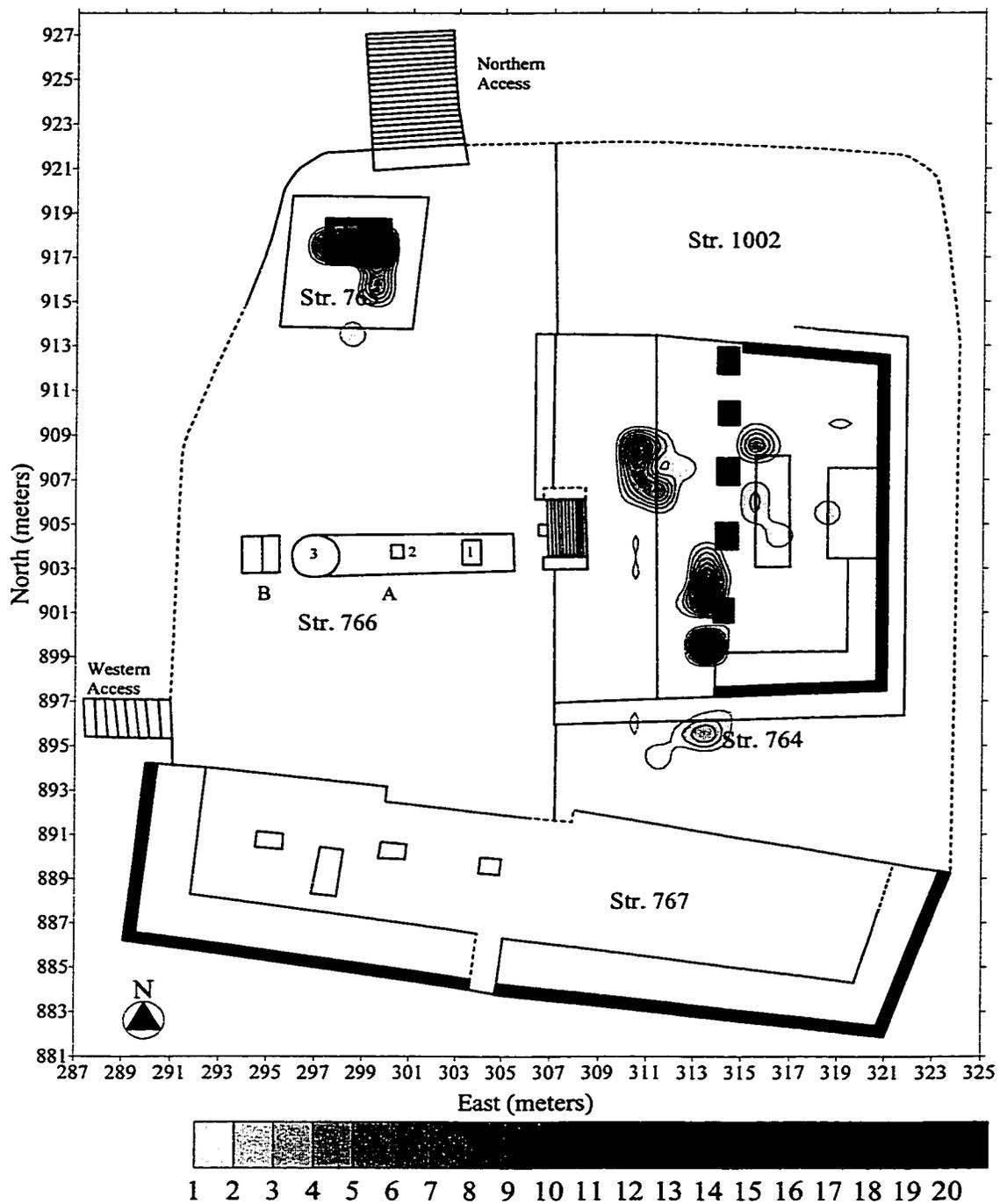


Figure 8-19. Zacpetén, Group C, Gotas Composite Sherds.

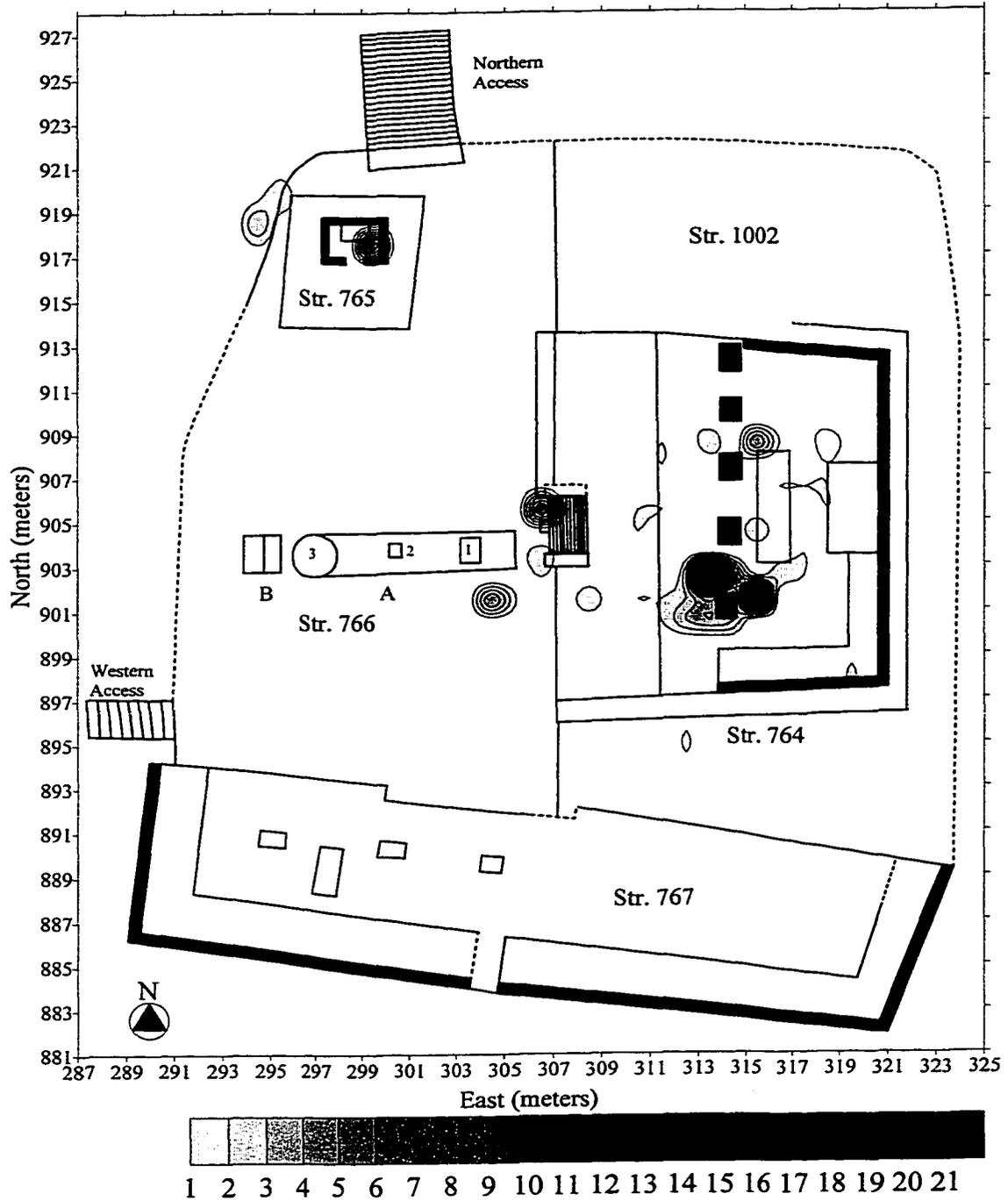


Figure 8-20. Zacpetén, Group C, Mumul Composite Sherds.

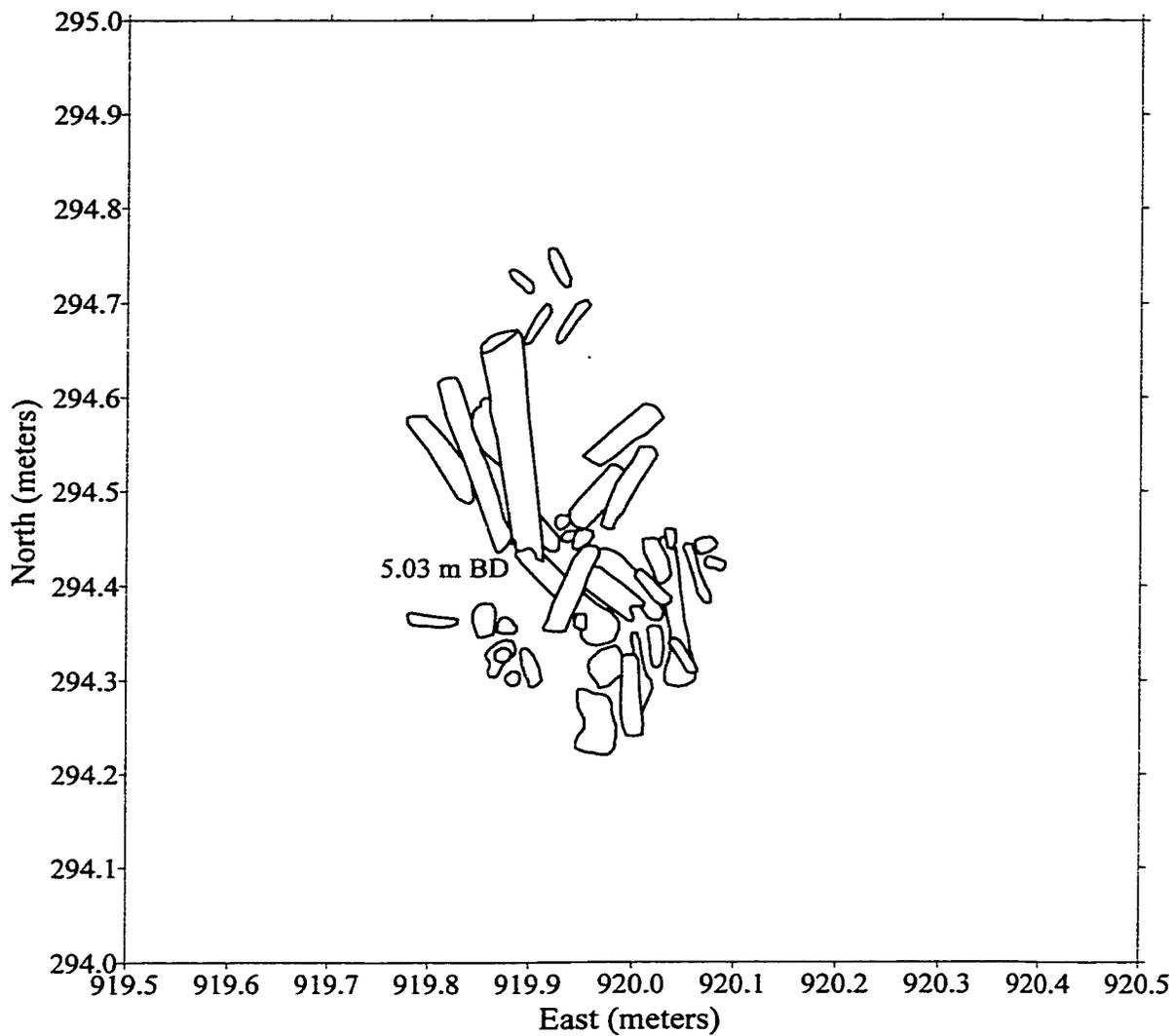


Figure 8-21. Zacpetén, Str. 765, Burial 765-1.

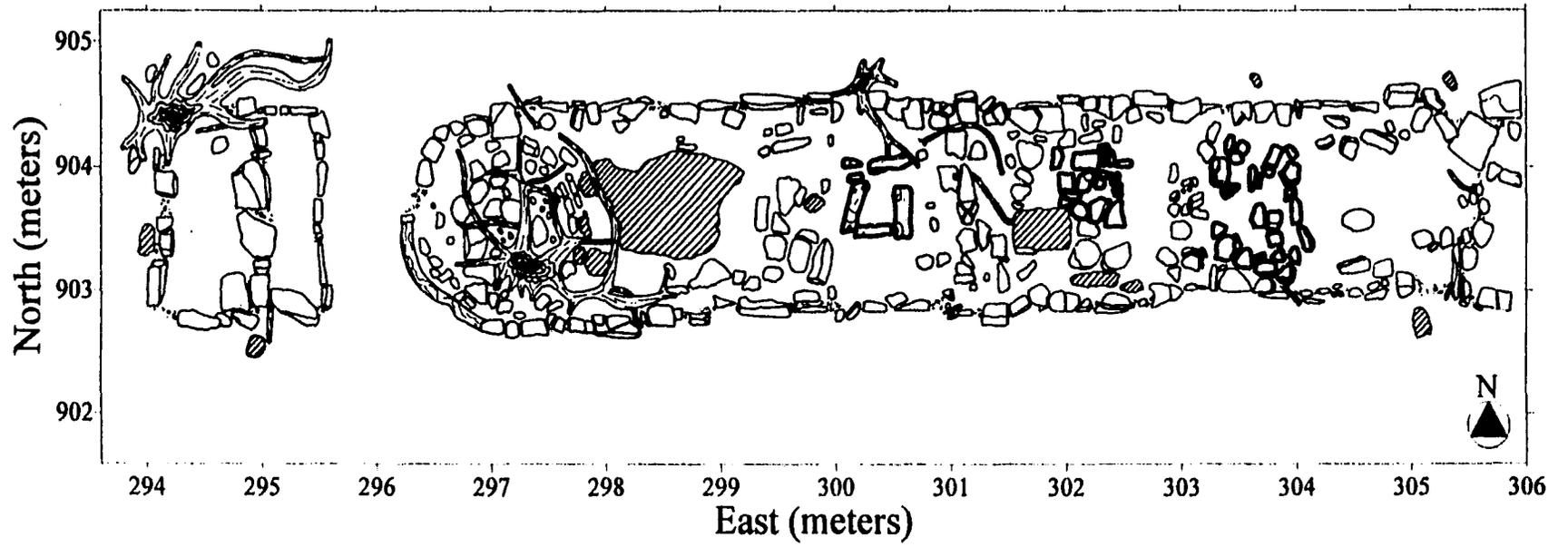


Figure 8-22. Zacpetén, Str. 766, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

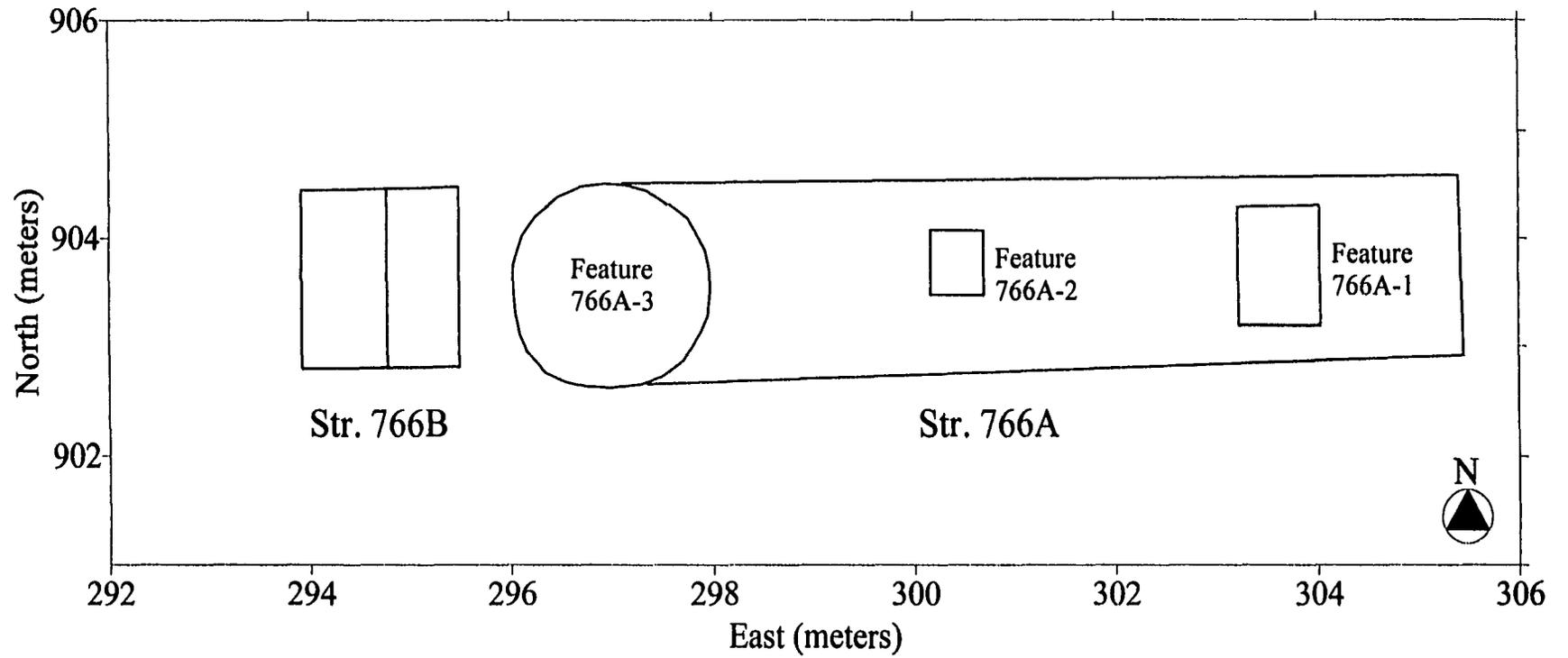


Figure 8-23. Zacpetén, Str. 766, Plan.

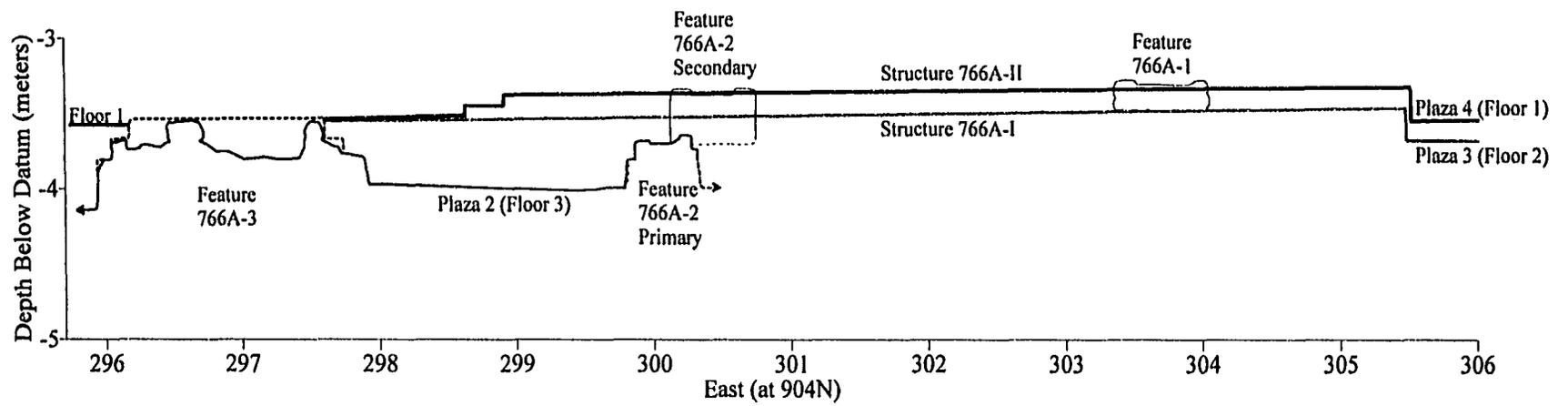
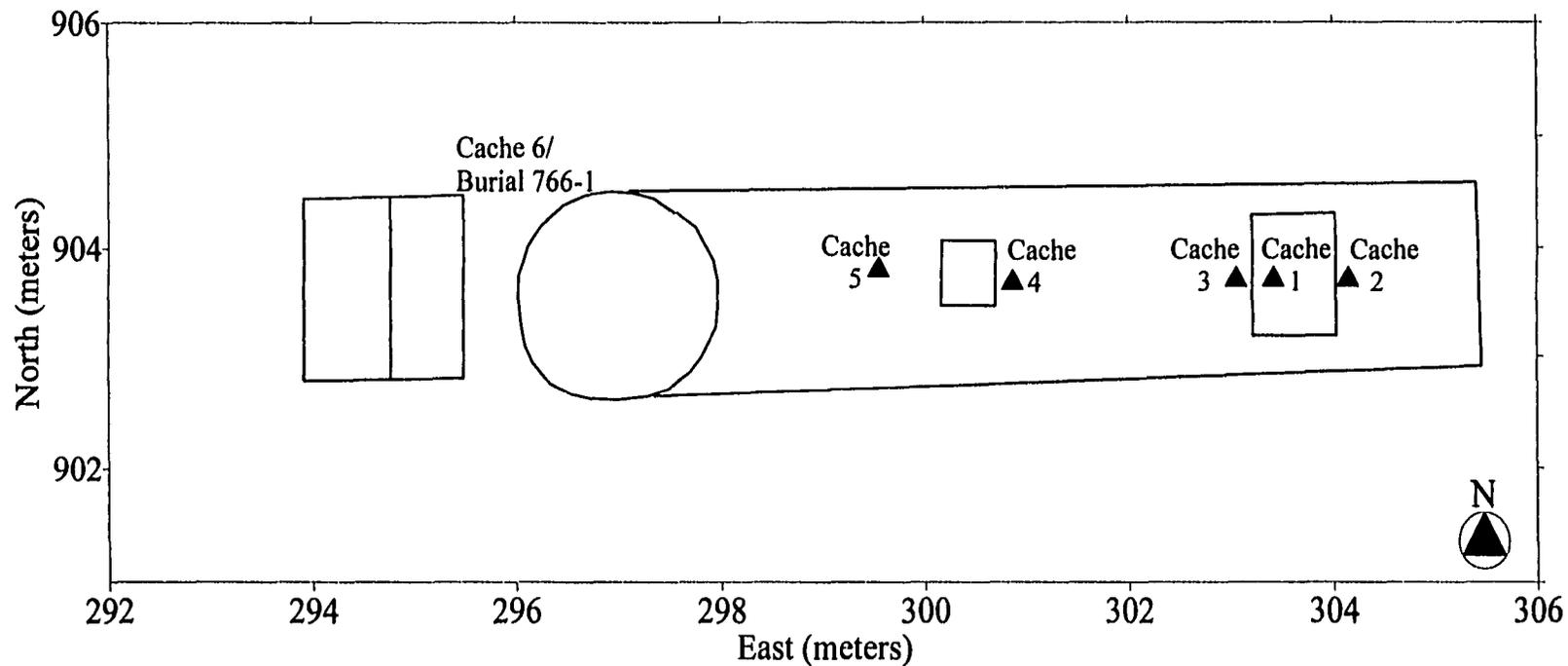


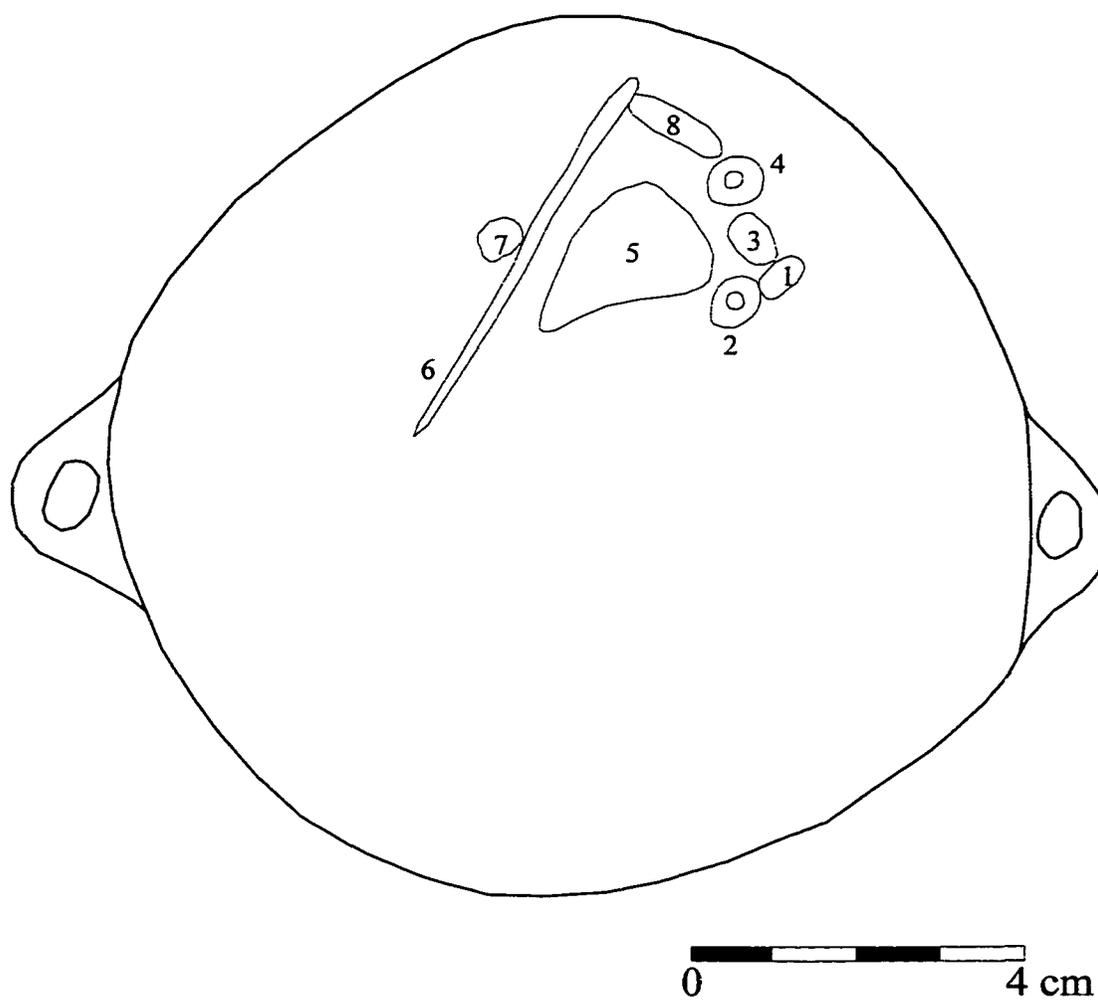
Figure 8-24. Zacpetén, Str. 766, Cross-Section and Previous Constructions.



**Cache Descriptions**

- 1 Small Chilo Jar
- 2 Lidded Cache Vessel (Mumul Composite with a White Stucco Wash)
- 3 Large Chac Effigy Censer Head and Small Chac Effigy Censer Head
- 4 Tripod Plate
- 5 Human Mandible
- 6 Human Remains (two articulated vertebrae, miscellaneous bone, and 32 teeth)

Figure 8-25. Zacpetén, Str. 766, Caches.



- 1- Greenstone Bead
- 2- Greenstone Bead
- 3- Red Stone Bead
- 4- Black Stone Bead

- 5- Greenstone Pendant
- 6. Stingray Spine
- 7. Greenstone Bead
- 8. Red Stone Bead

Figure 8-26. Zacpetén, Str. 766, Cache 2, Artifacts within the Cache Vessel.

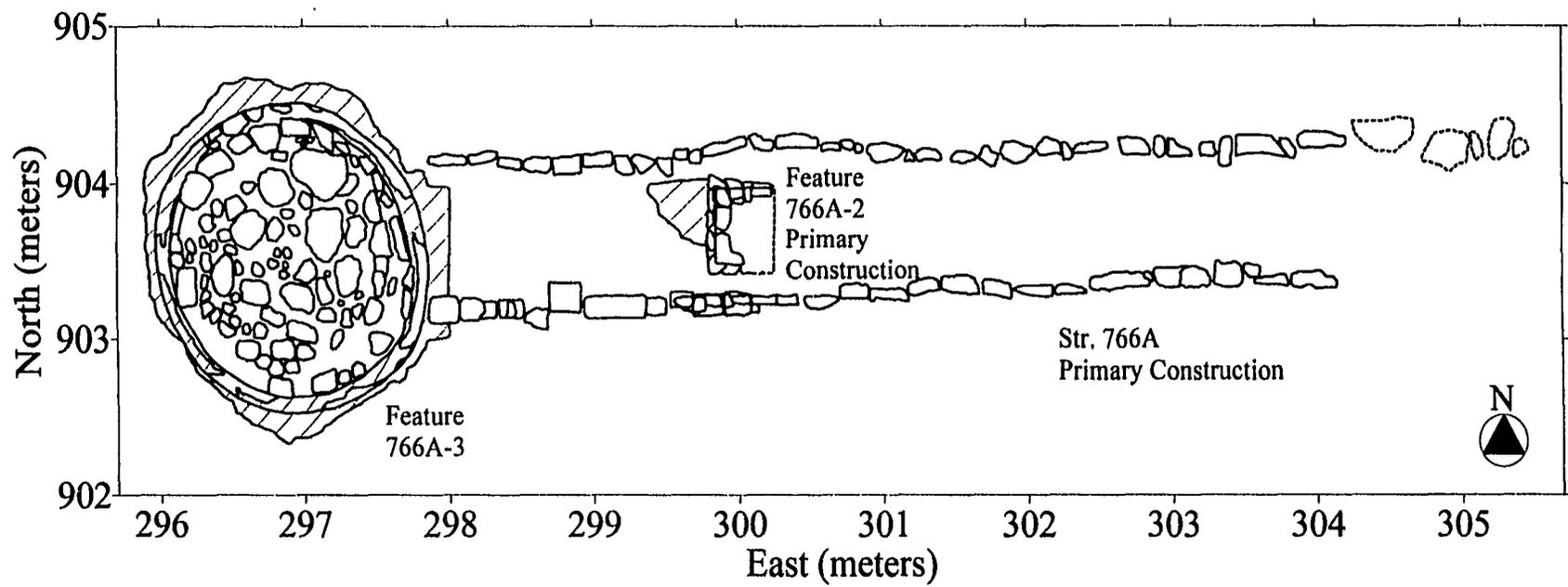


Figure 8-27. Zacpetén, Str. 766, Earlier Constructions of Str. 766A and Features 766A-2 and 766A-3.

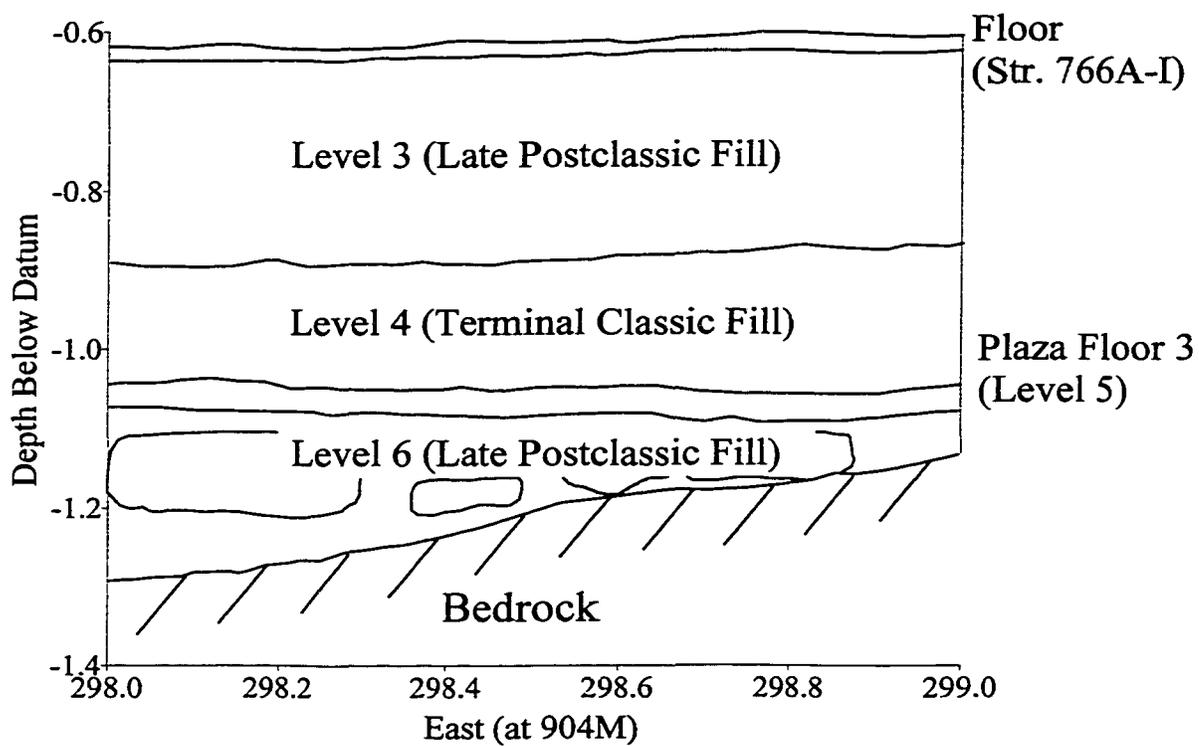


Figure 8-28. Zacpetén, Str. 766, Test Unit 904, 299, North Profile.

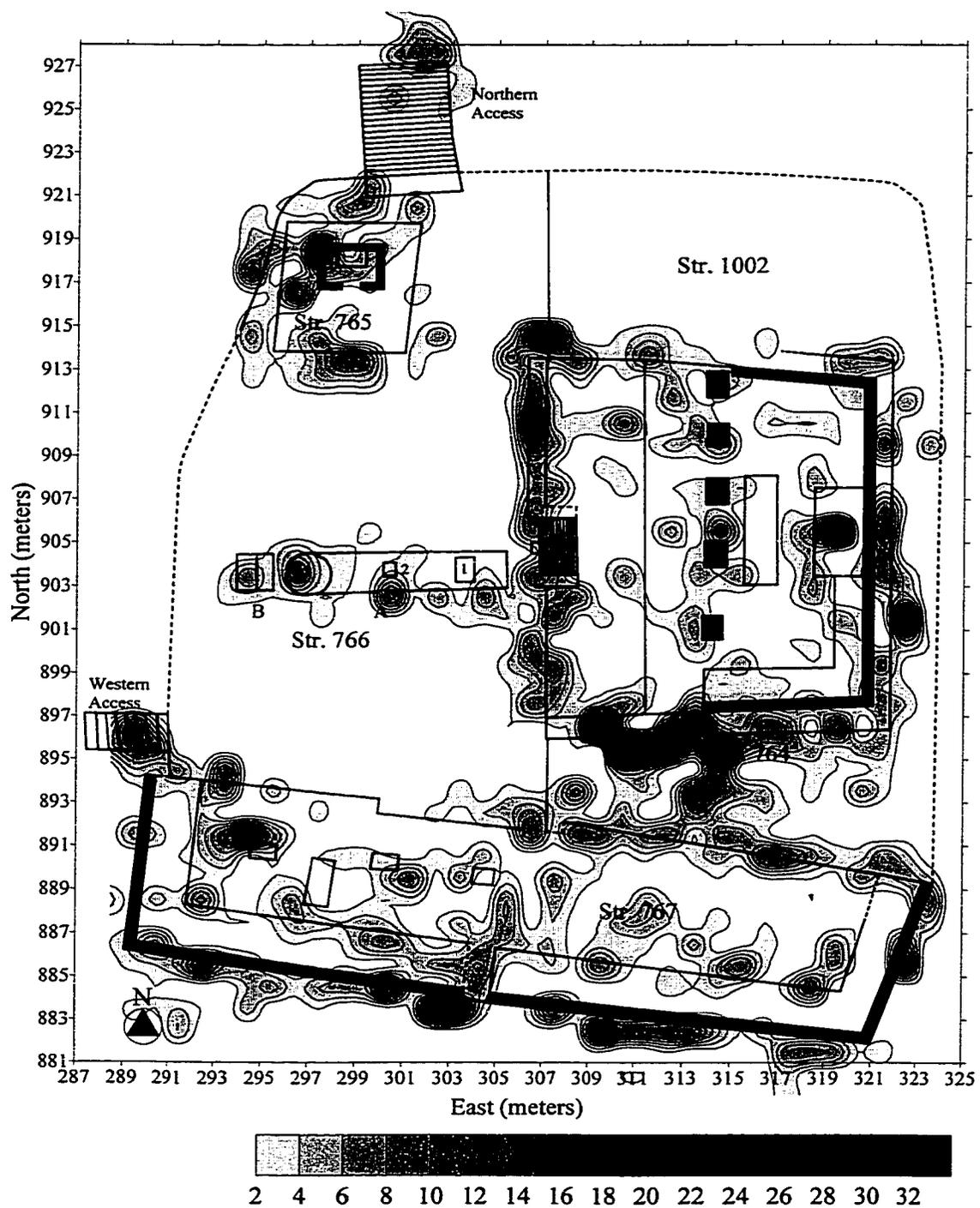


Figure 8-29. Zacpetén, Group C, Lithic Flakes.

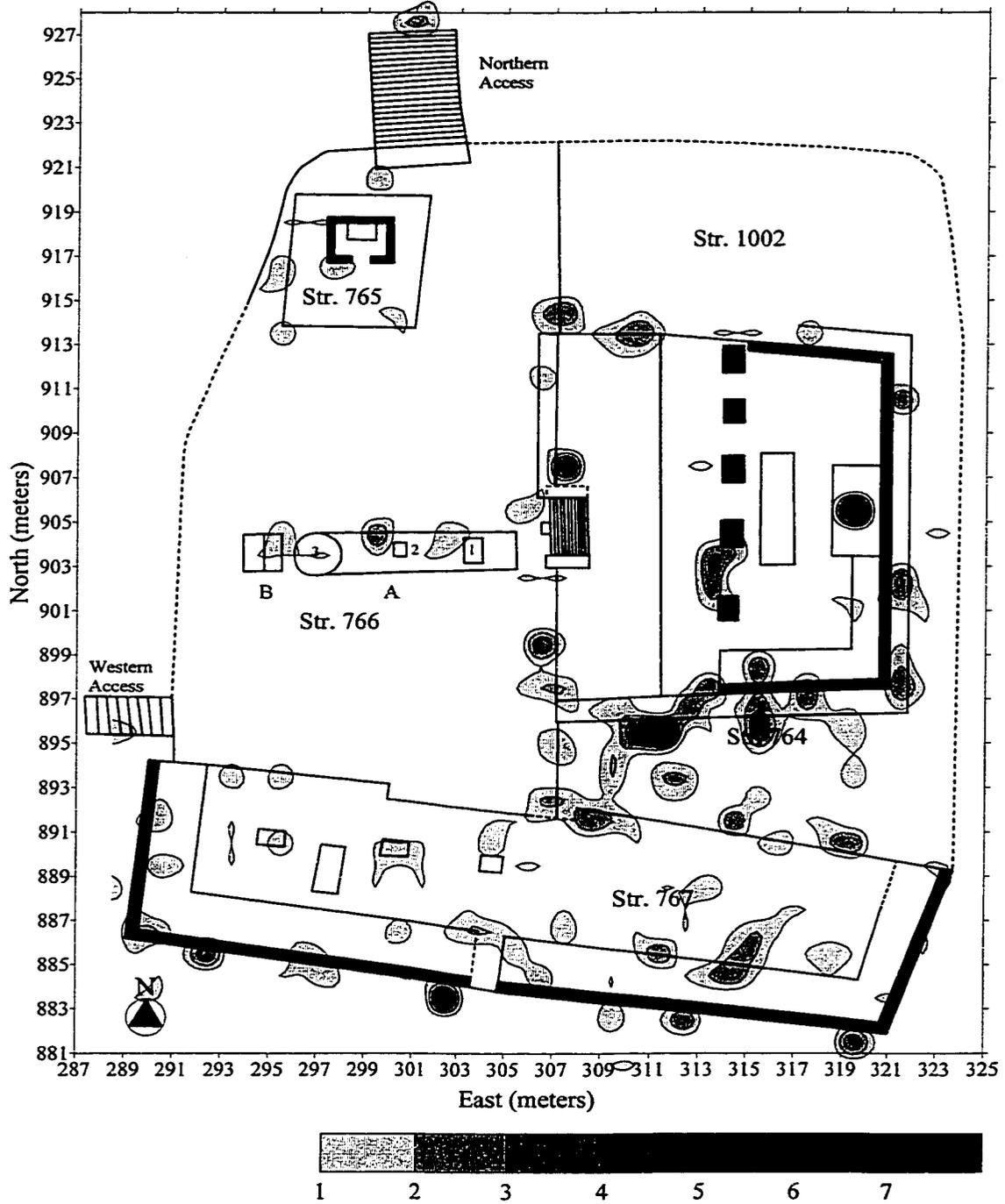


Figure 8-30. Zacpetén, Group C, Obsidian Blades.

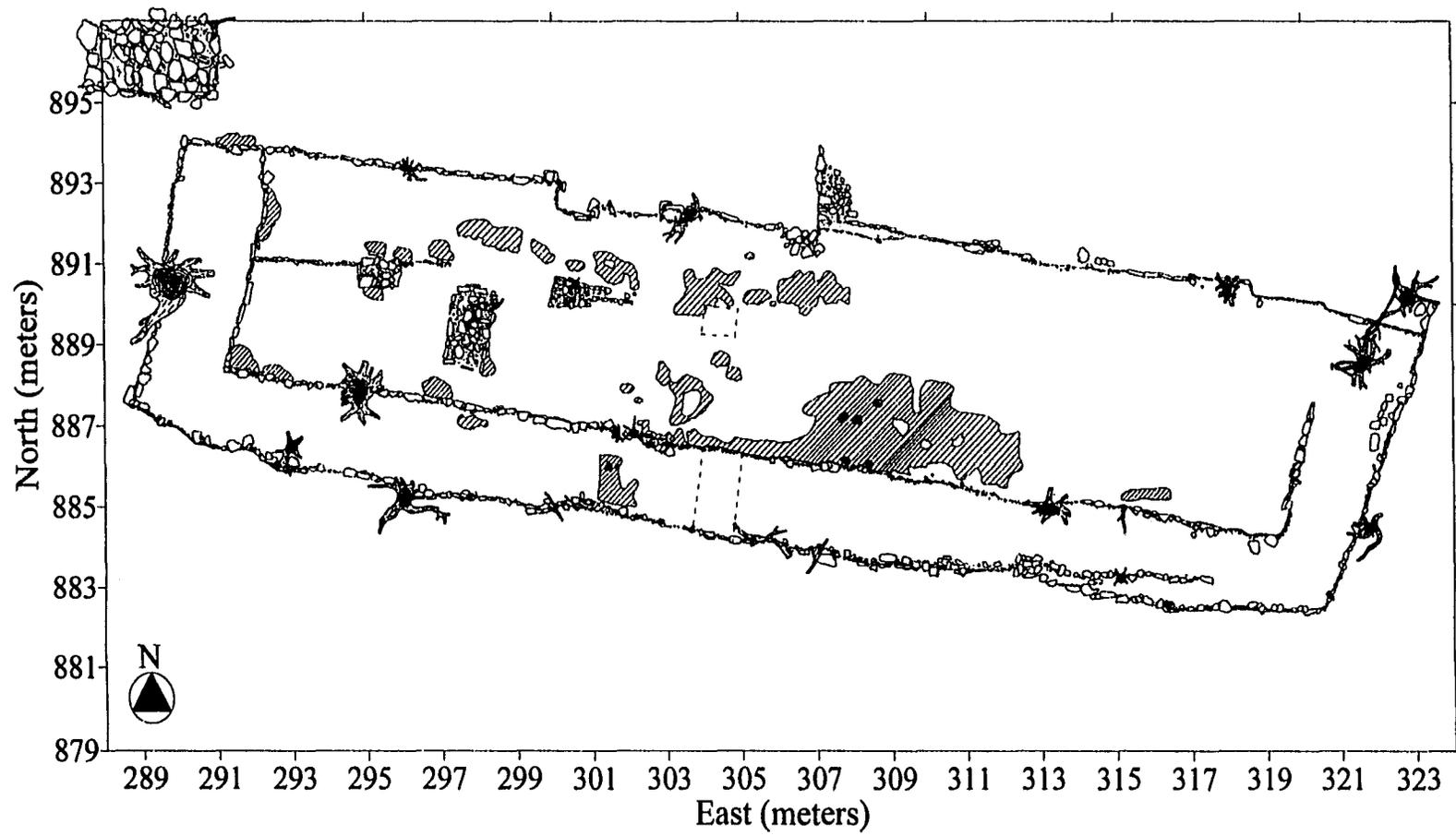


Figure 8-31. Zacpetén, Str. 767, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

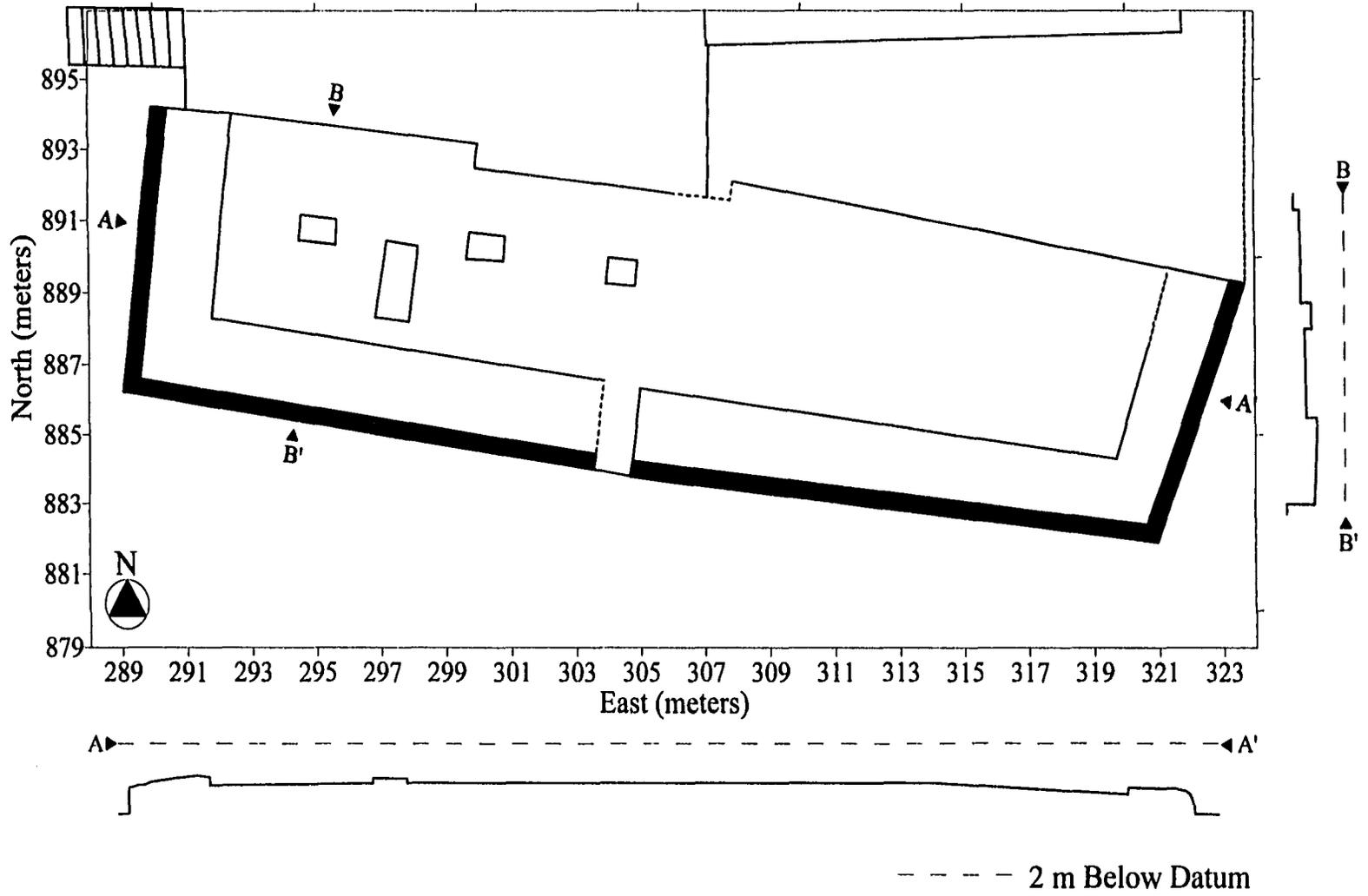


Figure 8-32. Zacpetén, Str. 767, Plan and Cross-Section.

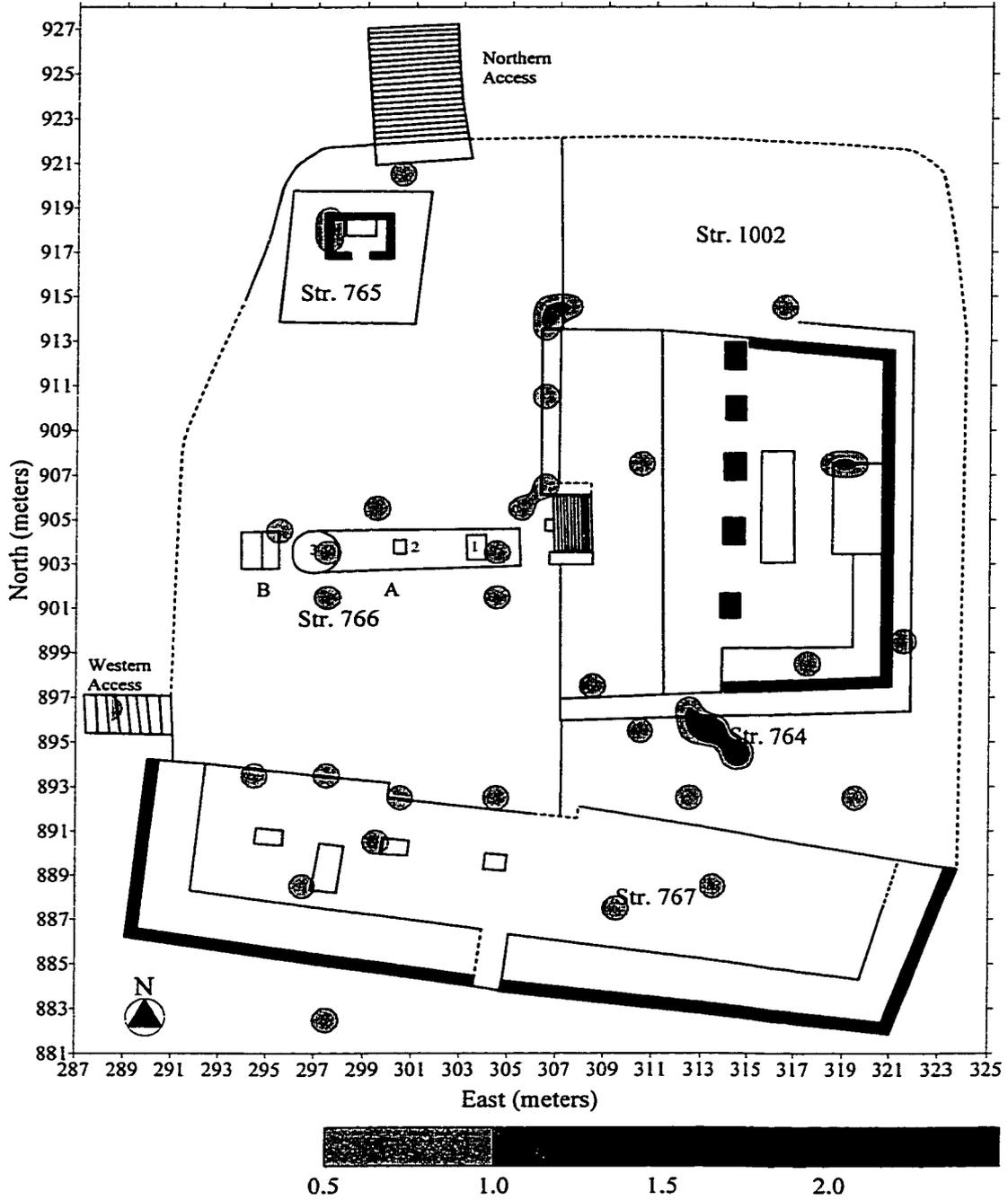


Figure 8-33. Zacpetén, Group C, Chert Corner Notched Points.

## CHAPTER 9: HOUSEHOLD EXCAVATIONS AT ZACPETÉN

In order to investigate domestic ritual practices, five residences and four associated buildings were excavated at Zacpetén. The sample was judgmental with the buildings chosen by size, group content, and location. Size and group content were a factor because excavations at Mayapán demonstrated elite domestic groups tended to be more imposing and grouped with additional houses, religious structures, and service buildings (Smith 1962: 218). The largest and smallest known residences at Zacpetén and three buildings of intermediate size were selected for excavation. Some of these had associated structures and others did not. By selecting a range of sizes and buildings with and without associated structures, a broad range of social statuses were investigated. Location was also a factor in the selection of residences. Zacpetén may have been divided into several distinct corporate groups, as suggested by the its three open halls; hence, residences were selected from a variety of locations (Figure 9-1).

### Domestic Group 664

Domestic Group 664 is located east of Group B approximately 35 m west of the Lake Salpetén shoreline. The group is comprised of a residence, Str. 664, and a small rectangular building, Str. 789, which may be either a shrine or kitchen (Figures 9-2 and 9-3). The two buildings rest on a small platform serving as a patio. A 224 m<sup>2</sup> excavation block was used to investigate the entire patio group. All of the masonry of the group is

composed of hard limestone rubble. The patio, including the space occupied by Strs. 664 and 799, has an area of approximately 180 m<sup>2</sup>. The patio retaining walls are composed of medium to very large random rubble. The patio has no clearly defined northern edge as it ends when it meets higher terrain. The western edge of the patio is defined by the base of the eastern retaining wall of the platform terrace upon which rest Str. 662 and Str. 665, large tandem residences of presumably higher status individuals. The patio of Group 664 provided a level activity surface in naturally sloped terrain; however, an outcrop of uneven bedrock lies in its the southwest corner. The patio surface does not appear to have been plastered. A disturbed inset stairway lies along the eastern edge of the patio leading east toward the lake's edge and nearby buildings.

#### Architectural Composition of Str. 664 and 799

Str. 664 rests in the northwest corner of the patio on a low building platform facing due south. The building's floor does not appear to have been plastered. The southern edge of the platform is composed of poorly coursed rubble. As with the patio, the platform provided a level activity surface. An inset stairway lies along the southern face of the platform. The superstructure had no masonry partitions, but perishable walls likely enclosed the building. A wall foundation composed of limestone slabs defines the northern edge of the superstructure. A 70 cm to 1.2 m space lay between the northern wall and the northern edge of the platform that one might speculate could have been utilized for household activities. The eastern and western edges of the structure were defined by the edge of the platform. The front or eastern side of the superstructure was probably open with perishable columns lying south of the platform.

The most prominent feature within Str. 664 is the bench (Figure 9-3 and Table 6-1). This bench differs from those of most of the other excavated residences because it was straight rather than L-shaped. No traces of plaster were encountered on the surface of the bench or in the front room. A masonry wall does not line the back of the bench, but a perishable wall may have once divided the back from the front room, though no evidence for such a wall was recovered. Despite the lack of plaster, the front room was to the south of the bench, as that is the location of the stairway to the patio and the north side of the building was not open. In line with and east of the bench was an irregular low platform formed of limestone slabs in a single course, probably used as a flat foundation. Similar features were encountered in Str. 732 and Str. 758, described below. A 50 by 95 cm area of burned limestone ballast was encountered 50 cm north of the slab foundation.

Str. 799 is located on the southern edge of the patio apparently centered upon the stairway of Str. 664. It is a partial rectangle of medium-sized limestone slabs. The slabs may have been a foundation for a perishable construction or they may have simply been masonry tables paralleling those in the open halls, described above. At Mayapán (Smith 1962: Figs. 3-7) and Cozumel (Freidel and Sabloff 1984: Figs. 29-30 and Table 8), similar small rectangular buildings centered upon residences and other structures in domestic groups were found to be household altars or shrines.

#### Previous Constructions of Domestic Group 664

Four 1 x 1 m units were excavated into the fill of Str. 664 and three were excavated into the patio in order to search for features and record the construction history. These test units revealed no prior masonry or plaster constructions beneath Domestic Group 664; however, a Terminal Classic fill layer was found beneath the Late

Postclassic fill layer (Figure 9-4). Unit 302, 592 was located 10 cm west of the bench and encountered a human burial (Fea. 664-1) in the platform fill (Figure 9-5). The origin of the burial pit was not discerned during the excavation, but it was 1.65 m long (north/south), at least 65 cm wide, and its base lay 130 cm b.d. This was only 30 cm deeper than the floor of Str. 664, but the burial was actually interred under the higher platform which rose immediately to the west of the Str. 664. The pit contained the primary inhumation of an adult, which lay 1.1 m b.d. The individual was buried partially flexed on its right side with its hands near the mid-section. The skull was to the north and faced west. A fragmented unidentified vessel lay to the west of the individual and numerous chert flakes were found in its hands.

#### Artifact Distributions of Str. 664 and Str. 799

Artifact frequencies were sparse in the majority of Domestic Group 664. The most prominent concentration appears on the western edge of the group and was most likely secondary refuse dumped from the edge of the higher platform to the west. This concentration included miscellaneous ceramics (Figure 9-6), bone, and shell; chert debitage/flakes, hammerstones, blades, and cores; mano and metate fragments (Figure 9-7); animal and human teeth; and net weights. The back room of the house contains more mano and metate fragments and hammerstones than the front room, but these patterns could also have been the result of deposition from the platform to the west. One definite concentration found in the back room of the house included obsidian debitage/flakes and blades (Figure 9-8). The front room was relatively clean, but several whistle/flute fragments and chert cores were found around the bench. Forty chert and obsidian corner notched points were distributed across the patio, but only two of these were found within

the residence. Several figurine sherds were scattered across the residence and patio including two female images.

No artifacts were encountered in Str. 799 that suggest how it might have been used. The identification of altars in domestic groups is problematic because household rituals may have utilized containers and offerings that are indistinguishable from household refuse.

### Domestic Group 719

The household group centered upon Str. 719 was located on the saddle between Group A and Group C, approximately 102 m from the former and 92 from the latter (Figure 9-1). An *aguada*, 'water hole, pond', lies 45 m to the east of the group and 50 m to the west is an inlet leading to Lake Salpeten. The group is composed of Str. 719, a tandem-room structure; Str. 721, an oratorio/ temple; and Str. 720, a small shrine (Figure 9-9). The three structures rest on an irregularly shaped platform with an area of approximately 1200 m<sup>2</sup> that blends with the hill slope to its north, but stands about 1 m high to the south. Excavations were focused upon the three visible buildings, but did not investigate substantial portions of the plaza.

#### Architectural Composition of Str. 719

Str. 719 (Figures 9-10 and 9-11) is located on the northern side of Domestic Group 719 and was the residence upon which the group was focused. The building faces south at an azimuth of 181° east of north and is composed of two primary divisions: a front room and a back room. A 532 m<sup>2</sup> excavation uncovered 100% of Str. 719.

The front room is open on the south side, has a plaster floor, an L-shaped bench painted with curvilinear designs, a medial shrine, an altar, and a small square masonry feature. In front of the altar and bench, splotches of red paint were found upon the floor.

The face of the L-shaped bench was painted with red curvilinear designs. Hundreds of fragments of painted plaster were found adjacent to the bench. The paint is not faded and may have been applied just before the building was abandoned. The designs were restricted to the upper portion of the bench because they did not exist on the lower 10 cm---the section remaining in place. The top of the bench was separated into seats or compartments by soft cut limestone dividers, embedded into the fill of the bench, likely borrowed from Classic period buildings. Ten such stones, of various sizes, divided the northern bench into 10 or 11 sections. They may have been seat backs instead of dividers. Given ethnohistoric accounts of the front room of tandem structures being used as social areas, it is possible that these stones facilitated sitting. An alternative explanation is that they held objects that were later removed. The eastern arm of the bench was largely eroded and it is unknown whether it had such dividers.

The medial shrine of the front room was enclosed by three walls including the interior wall of the structure and two extensions from that wall. The surface and sides of the shrine were capped by a plaster surface, but do not appear to have been painted. West of the shrine lies an altar, partially composed of soft cut limestone borrowed from Classic period constructions. A large piece of stucco was found on the altar, which was painted with red and black on white. The designs on the stucco were dots and lines and the preserved fragment had been re-stuccoed and repainted several times. These designs are nearly identical to those painted on the ceremonial robes and some god pots of the

Northern Lacandon Maya described above. The molded stucco may have been the robe of an ancestor with *t'o'ojil* status. Among the Lacandon, *t'o'ojil* are men with ritual and/or social power (Davis 1978: 57). South of the altar is a small masonry rectangle. This rectangle could have been the foundation for a post or another altar. Given its similarity to a feature along the medial axis of Str. 721, one might assume the latter.

Just west of the larger altar was the entrance into the back room. The back room is a large rectangular space enclosed by masonry walls on all four sides with a dirt floor. The only masonry feature in this room is composed of two large metates embedded in the floor. A similar feature was found in Str. 747 and both may have been domestic altars.

Fourteen test units were excavated into the floor, fill, and adjacent plaza areas of Str. 719 in search of caches, burials, and previous construction episodes. Adjacent to the west side of the building, Test Unit 705, 292 revealed the only burial in Str. 719, which lay 1.57 m b.d., just below the ground surface (Figure 9-12). The burial included only the lower half of the individual. While the plan drawing suggests that the burial extends into Unit 705, 291, excavations revealed it did not. The burial was deposited on a sloped terrain and the upper half of the body was lost to erosion. The individual lay supine oriented with the feet at 33° east of north. No offerings were found with the individual, but two quartz crystals found in unit 706, 291 could have eroded from the interment.

A cache vessel was encountered in the medial altar of the front room, 0.18 m below the altar surface. It was a low-fired Chilo paste lidded restricted orifice bowl with two loop handles on the exterior and one on the lid---a typical cache vessel of Zacpetén. It contained a greenstone bead, two red stone beads, and a flat greenstone rectangle, perhaps a mosaic stone.

The most illuminating of the test pits, with respect to the construction sequence of Str. 719, was Test Unit 702, 299 (Figure 9-13), a 1 x 1 m unit excavated into the northern portion of the bench. This unit reached bedrock, which lay 1.55 m b.d. During or after the Early Classic period, a building or platform (Level 8) was constructed upon the bedrock and capped by a plaster surface (Floor 3). Other test units demonstrated that this building was oriented 65° east of the cardinal axis; however, its dimensions are uncertain. Upon this early construction was placed an Early Postclassic period fill layer (Level 6) capped with a plaster surface (Floor 2). However, test units south of Str. 719 detected large amounts of Late Postclassic period ceremonial refuse associated with the second floor. Floor 2 was later covered by a fill layer (Level 4) with no diagnostic sherds, but the fill of the bench of Str. 719 built upon Level 4 was dated to the early Late Postclassic period. As will be discussed below, the occupation and use of this latest construction phase is known to actually date to the Contact or early Colonial period.

South of Str. 719, Test Unit 696, 296 encountered a trash pit with large amounts of freshwater shell (*Pachychilus* and *Pomacea*), bone, and ceramic sherds, which were dated to the early Late Postclassic period and included Paxcaman, Topoxté, and Tinaja Red and Macanche Red on paste sherds (Cecil 2001: personal comm.). The size and shape of the feature could not be determined, but it originated below the plaza surface.

#### Artifact Distributions of Str. 719

Str. 719 seems to have been quickly abandoned because of the quantity and quality of *de facto* refuse. Utilitarian items including miscellaneous ceramics (Figure 9-14), bone, and shell; obsidian blades (Figure 9-15), cores (Figure 9-16), and corner notched points (Figure 9-17); chert debitage/flakes (Figure 9-18), blades, corner notched

points (Figure 9-19), cores (Figure 9-20), and bifaces (Figure 9-21); manos/mano fragments (Figure 9-22); net weights (Figure 9-23); gizzard stones; and hammerstones were concentrated in the back room or behind the structure. Ceramic sherds in the back room were concentrated against the interior wall. Within this concentration were at least four complete vessels (Figure 9-24). Two vessels were embedded into the dirt floor just north of the shrine and were semi-permanent features. Both were utilitarian jars holding carbonized remains, including maize kernels. A sample dated with AMS analysis (Beta – 107791) (Table 1-1) had a Conventional Age of 200+/-40 B.P., calibrated to A.D. 1639 to 1701, A.D. 1721 to 1818, A.D. 1831 to 1881, and A.D. 1915 to 1944 (2 sigma, 95% probability). The dates between A.D. 1831 and 1944 have low probabilities and the lack of historic artifacts in the building does not support them.

In addition to the jars, large portions of an Ixpop Polychrome and a Macanche Red on Paste vessels were found adjacent to the wall. These four vessels were the most obvious in situ vessels, but more vessels are likely present among the 36,589 non-censer sherds of the building.

One important activity that appears to have been taking place in the back room at the time of the building's abandonment was the production of red pigment and probably paint. In the western portion of the room were found two small limestone metates or mortars (Figure 9-16). In addition, four crystalline smooth river cobble pestles, two of which had red stains in their fracture lines, suggesting contact with pigment, were found in the area. Associated with one of the four cobble manos/pestles were two fragments of gypsum, which is found naturally in some areas of the Salpetén basin, and a couple of meters south of these was a piece of fired gypsum (Figure 9-25). Fired gypsum produces

plaster of Paris and it is possible that it was used either as an undercoat or as a base for pigment in the painting of Str. 719. Near the fired gypsum were found two deep red stones, one of which was quite large (>30 cm). Field tests revealed that these stones could be ground into water-soluble pigment (Cecil 1998: personal comm.). A third pigment stone was located nearby. Pigment was produced in the western portion of the back room just before the abandonment of Str. 719 and the red designs on the bench face of the front room may have been freshly painted. This behavior suggests ritual activity because in many areas, cleaning and renovation purified houses during Near Year rites (Landa 1941: 151). The front rooms of houses of Yucatecan elite were painted during the Colonial period (Landa 1941: 86).

Concentrations of chert hammerstones and obsidian cores were also encountered in the back room, suggesting other activity areas. In fact, Str. 719 had more obsidian cores than any other structure at Zacpetén. Furthermore, the building had more manos and metates than all of the other residences combined. Most of these objects were found in the back room, but some appear to have been used as construction stones. Several tiny pieces of worn gravel near the interior wall appear to be gizzard stones. A concentration of ceramic figurines in the western portion of the room could have been toys, but figurines were also part of a shaman's medicine bag and placed under the beds of pregnant women (Landa 1941: 129 and 154). However, these particular figurines were not female, but were primarily animal effigy figurines.

A final important concentration that included copper bells and shell beads may be associated with the metates embedded into the floor of the back room (Figure 9-25). It was odd that two copper bells were found in the building within 2 m of one another, one

inside the back room and the other outside the residence, the latter in association with three shell beads. It is possible, though decidedly speculative, that these items were part of a decorative element located on the wall behind the metate feature.

Compared to the back room and area behind Str. 719, the front room is relatively clean of everyday refuse; however, it held ceremonial refuse in the form of censers and other artifacts. One concentration of 13 non-image censers was found overlapping the interior wall in the eastern portion of the structure in a mirror-like fashion (Figure 9-26). A detailed analysis of these ceramics including the reconstruction of the vessels concluded that in several cases, sherds from the same censer were encountered on both sides of the wall (Figure 9-27). It seems likely; therefore, that these vessels were resting on top of the interior wall when it collapsed. In addition to the censers, 40% of a Saca polychrome collared jar, a piece of quartz crystal, and the majority of a copper axe-head were found in the concentration.

The medial shrine of the front room contained several ceremonial items. One was an in situ red slipped Kulut Modeled image censer (Figure 9-28). The censer is small and depicts an individual with sunken eyes, pigtails, filed teeth, “bolts” in his mouth, ear spools, and a reptile headdress. The image on this censer always occurs alone at Zacpetén and was not included among the temple deities. Within the bowl of the censer was a small cup, probably used to offer ceremonial drink to the deity. Similar cups were found in temples at Zacpetén, often near larger deity censers.

A third important item on the shrine, lying adjacent to the Kulut Modeled image censer, was half of a tapir or peccary mandible (Figure 9-29). Among the Lacandon, animal mandibles were kept in the ceiling of ceremonial buildings, perhaps as sacrificial

markers (Tozzer 1907: 115). However, like jaguars, tapirs were considered powerful animals and their parts were more valued than those of other animals. The killing of a large tapir was “an act of great bravery” and families passed preserved portions of its body such as the skin or bones through generations to commemorate the event (Landa 1941: 203). Such objects were, therefore, memorials to ancestral heroics, heirlooms deeply imbued with the spirit of the ancestors and, subsequently, the lineage foundation.

Concentrated at the base of the shrine and on the edge on the platform edge, directly south of the altar, were the sherds of less than 25% of a Patojo Modeled var. Patojo image censer. At Zacpetén, in situ deposits of such censers are rare outside of temples and this seems to be a discarded portion of a censer, likely from Str. 721.

The altar was relatively clean of artifacts; however, excavations extended into the interior of this feature and just below the surface were found the bases of two Extranjeras/La Justa non-image censers (Figure 9-27). The bases seem to have settled into the altar as it deteriorated. The two censers are of the same paste type and appear to have been paired.

The interior space of Str. 719 was divided into a front room and a back room, the former being plastered, painted, relatively clean and containing ceremonial artifacts. The back room, on the other hand, seems to have been oriented toward domestic activities involving the use of obsidian artifacts, utilitarian ceramics, animal remains, paint, and so on. Str. 719 was the largest residence excavated at Zacpetén and among the three largest at the site. Given the size, amount of masonry, and exotic artifacts such as copper bells and axe-heads, this residence was obviously occupied by a family of elite status who had greater access to labor and resources. The front room of Str. 719 was also partially

composed of soft limestone borrowed from Classic period constructions, making it similar to ceremonial buildings. The building may have been quickly abandoned because the occupants' possessions, including ceremonial censers and heirlooms such as copper artifacts and the tapir mandible, were left in situ. Furthermore, the pigment-producing tools and a possible newly painted bench surface suggest an important event occurred just prior to its abandonment, perhaps a renewal rite.

#### Architectural Composition Str. 720 and Str. 721

Str. 720 and Str. 721 lie on the eastern edge of Domestic Group 719 (Figures 9-30 and 9-31). Str. 721 is a household temple/oratorio and Str. 720 is a rectangular masonry altar or a small shrine. The former faces west at an angle of 269° east of north and lies 11 m southeast of Str. 719. A 168 m<sup>2</sup> excavation uncovered 100% of Str. 720 and 721.

Str. 720 is located west of and centered upon Str. 721. It is a low masonry rectangle standing only 20 cm high. Most of the stones of Str. 720 were hard rubble but some were dressed soft limestone blocks. Str. 720 did not have walls indicating the direction it faced, but its orientation is the same as Str. 721. The building was the same size and form as, and lay directly in line with, the medial altar of Str. 721. Adjacent to Str. 720, on its eastern side was Fea. 720-2, a 50 x 50 cm masonry rectangle that stood 10 cm high. This feature was the same size and shape as Fea. 721-3, described below, and was found on the same east/ west axis, but this feature did not contain special deposits. West of the main body of Str. 720 was another masonry rectangle, Fea. 720-3, which measured 70 x 100 cm and stood 28 cm high. The interior of Fea. 720-3 was excavated and no special deposits were found in or beneath it. Similar to Str. 607B and Str. 766B, Str. 720 was a statue shrine; however, no sculpted limestone was recovered.

When the interior of Str. 720 was excavated, the primary construction was encountered (Figure 9-32). This earlier construction measured 60 x 70 cm and was composed of soft limestone blocks as well as hard limestone rubble. Its base rested 40 cm below the platform floor between Strs. 720 and 721 at the same level as the original base of the west wall of Str. 721. Fea. 720-4 preceded all of the other components of Str. 720. The transition from a square to rectangular form of Str. 720 mimics that observed in Str. 607B and suggests a similar ontology. Fea. 720-4 lay more or less in line with Feas. 720-1, 720-2, 720-3, and 721-3, all of which were also square, along the medial axes of Str. 720 and Str. 721.

Str. 721 appears to have been a household temple. At the base of the northwest corner of the platform of Str. 721 were recovered several pieces of plaster painted with red curved lines like those recovered from the bench of Str. 719. The platform wall of Str. 721 appears to have been painted with such designs. A single double-return stair, partially composed of soft cut limestone, wrapped around the western side of the structure and had wings on the north and south sides of the building. A thick plaster surface with a red wash, which had been burned, covered most of the top of the stair.

The superstructure of Str. 721 was composed of a C-shaped wall, a medial altar, and an interior altar. Unlike most buildings at Zacpetén, Str. 721 did not have a masonry bench. Only the bases of these exterior walls survived and their construction methodology could not be reconstructed. The plaster surface of the superstructure is undulating as a result of root disturbance. The plaster was burned, but several areas of red wash were preserved on the floor. The plaster floor was charred in some areas and the entire floor was a gray color suggesting it had been exposed to high temperature.

Along the east wall of Str. 721 was the medial altar. Its edges were formed by a masonry face of a single course of vertical slabs, many of which were dressed soft limestone. A plaster surface was not encountered on top of the altar. The core of the medial altar was excavated as Fea. 721-1, but no caches were encountered in the fill. West of the medial altar lay a long low rectangular feature, the interior altar. A small square masonry feature (Fea. 721-3) lay west of the interior altar. It was 50 x 51 cm and stood 10 cm above the floor of the structure, the same dimensions as Fea. 720-2. Fea. 721-3 was originally thought to be a column base, but its medial placement and similarity to features of Str. 720 located in the same axis suggest that it had another use. This feature is also roughly the same dimensions as the small masonry rectangle to the south of the altar of Str. 719. These features may have been small altars.

The interior altar and the medial altar were excavated to search for caches and previous constructions of Str. 721. The unit in the interior altar encountered bedrock 1.76 m b.d., upon which was constructed a fill of medium to large rubble in a matrix of gray soil upon which rested the interior altar. Str. 721 had no previous construction stages. An additional test unit was excavated adjacent to the west wall and revealed that the wall base lay 40 cm below the plaza surface at the same level as the base of Fea. 720-1. Corresponding with the two construction phases of Str. 720, the plaza surrounding Str. 721 was reconstructed once.

#### Artifacts Distributions of Str. 720 and Str. 721

Since Str. 720 and Str. 721 were complementary buildings occupying a small space, the distributions of their artifacts will be discussed together. Utilitarian ceramic sherds (Figure 9-33), shell, obsidian blades, net weights, and chert flakes correspond with

wall collapse. However, two chert cores and 30 flakes were found just southeast of the medial altar, suggesting lithic flake production the rear of the building or secondary refuse from such activities. Animal bone was found in two concentrations (Figure 9-34). A concentration in the southeast corner of Str. 721 included smashed complete turtle carapaces, presumably drums or offering bowls. Two ceramic offering dishes, one manufactured and the other a large recycled worked jar sherd, found with the carapaces suggest the latter interpretation (Figure 9-35). The second bone concentration was west of the small square masonry feature, Fea. 721-3, and represented a variety of animals, including the cranium of at least one bird of prey (Figure 9-36). This deposit may have been offerings placed near the small altar. Several animal teeth and a human tooth were found outside the building against the north side of the platform.

A scatter of Chipotle Red sherds was found north of the interior altar and a concentration was found against the southeastern edge of the platform (Figure 9-37). The deposit of Chipotle Red sherds inside of Str. 721 included part of a lid and rim, which were very similar to those encountered in Cache 2 and Cache 4 of Str. 602. Excavations into the platform fill of Str. 721 did not reveal any caches. These sherds may have resulted from the termination of the cache of Str. 721. Evidence for a similar rite was encountered in Cache 2 of Str. 602, described above, but in that case the cache, and hence the building, were re-dedicated. In Str. 721, the rite was terminal--- a point clearly embodied by the burning of the building that followed the rite.

The use of effigy and non-effigy censers represents the primary activity of Strs. 720 and 721. A total of 822 censer sherds were recovered in the excavation, most of which had been burned and 34% (n=261) of which were burned to the point that they

could not be sorted according to censer type. The burning of the sherds corresponds with the burning of the plaster surface and stones of the walls of Str. 721, all of which suggest the building was destroyed by fire. Of the identifiable sherds, 25% (n=124) were non-effigy censers and the other 75% (n=372) were human effigy censers. At least five non-effigy censers were found in the building. A pair of Mumul Composite censers was located west of the interior altar (Figure 9-38). Another pair including a La Justa and a Gotas Composite censer was between the medial altar and interior altar (Figures 9-39 and 9-40). A large concentration of sherds from various non-effigy censer types, including sherds from the in situ vessels, was found just southwest of Fea. 721-3. Sherds of a Fijate Composite censer were dispersed over the eastern half of Str. 721.

Two types of in situ human effigy censers were encountered in Strs. 720 and 721: Kulut Modeled and Patojo Modeled (Figure 9-41). Most of the Kulut Modeled sherds once composed one vessel located in the concentration southwest of Fea. 721-3. This vessel was deposited with the concentration of non-effigy censers, suggesting the vessel types were utilized or disposed of similarly. A few sherds from a second Kulut Modeled vessel and sparse Idolos Modeled sherds were also found in the structure.

The distribution of the 299 Patojo Modeled censer sherds is puzzling (Figure 9-42). High concentrations of Patojo Modeled sherds were found north of the medial altar, west of the interior altar, and on the west side of Str. 721 on the step adjacent to the southern half of the east side of Str. 720. These distributions overlap those of the non-effigy sherds. Nevertheless, a close examination of the distribution of the Patojo Modeled censer sherds does not allow one to simply conclude that the censers were used in the same activities as the non-effigy censers. Each of the concentrations of Patojo

Modeled sherds represented not a single vessel, but of several. In addition, the sherds of each vessel were spread out all over the interior of Str. 721 and between Strs. 720 and 721. The vessels do not seem to have simply been smashed and scattered across the structure because the correlation of their sherds with those of the relatively in situ non-effigy censer sherd distributions demonstrates intentional placement.

The key to this enigma is found in the fact that at least five heads of deity effigies were encountered in the deposit. While a minimum of eight Patojo Modeled vessels were encountered, the sherds themselves did not add up to a substantial portion of any of these large effigies and arms and legs were very rare. If one compares the sherds of Strs. 720 and 721 with those of the two temples of Zacpetén, Str. 602 and Str. 764, one observes an opposite phenomenon in the latter two. Effigy censer sherd concentrations in temples were composed of paired censers in relatively tight concentrations and were generally more than 75 % complete, but very few effigy heads were encountered and arms and legs were very common. Given the absence of concentrations of nearly complete large censers anywhere in Domestic Group 719, it is possible the sherds in Str. 721 were brought from somewhere else, possibly the temples. Eighteenth century occupants of Group 719 might have been revitalizing the use of effigy censers in their ritual practices. Another equally plausible scenario is that the censers were actually used in Str. 721, but the smashing of censers and dividing of sherds involved the placement of many sherds in another location, as seen in Group A.

The interior space of Str. 721 included a medial altar and an interior altar. In addition, the building faces west and included numerous Patojo Modeled image censers. These vessels were in situ, but partial and may have been brought from elsewhere. The

non-image censers appear to have been in situ deposits. The layout, directionality, and presence of Patojo Modeled image censers corresponds with that of the two temples at Zacpetén. A single in situ Kulut modeled censer was encountered on the steps outside the structure. The interior of the building and many of the censer sherds were burned and the cache terminated, which corresponds with the abandonment of Str. 719.

### Domestic Group 732

The domestic group centered upon Str. 732 is located east and down hill of Group C. It is a small patio group placed upon a leveled-out slope. West of the group is the extremely steep slope leading up to Group C, while to the east the terrain gradually descends to the shore of Lake Salpeten, which lies 50 m away. The group contains a residence (Str. 732) with the open patio to its northeast. An additional small platform (Str. 1004) was found on the patio, but its function is unknown. A 169 m<sup>2</sup> excavation block uncovered 100% of Str. 732. The north/east grid was placed 10° west of north. The size of the complete patio is uncertain as only part of it was excavated, but it has an area of at least 200 m<sup>2</sup>. The southeastern edge of the patio is composed of two terraces, both of which have retaining walls of random rubble. The patio leveled the sloped ground surface and was flush with the hill on the west side of Str. 732, but was 1.6 m higher than the ground surface to its east. Leading from the ground surface to the top of the patio's southeastern edge is a small inset stairway with no balustrades.

#### Architectural Composition of Str. 732

Str. 732, a residence, is located on the southwestern edge of the domestic group and faced 37.5° east of north (Figures 9-43 and 9-44). The building was chosen for

excavation because it is small and it was hoped that the “lower” social tiers were being investigated; however, it turned out to be larger than expected and well constructed. It is a tandem shaped building with an L-shaped bench in the front room. South of the bench, in the back room, is a low rectangular platform. The floor and bench of the front room was covered by a relatively thick coat of plaster and the back room had a dirt surface.

The plaster on the floor and bench in the front room of Str. 732 is approximately 2 cm thick, which is quite thick relative to most other buildings at Zacpetén. The floor of the building was 0.15 to 0.4 m above that of the open patio to the northeast. The L-shaped bench of Str. 732 lies in the northwestern portion of the front room. The bench stands 20 cm above the floor of the front room and is also covered by a generous coat of plaster. Lining the back of the bench is a standing L-shaped wall. In the “elbow” portion of the bench surface were several spots of charred plaster. At the southeastern end of body of the bench is a crude shrine. “Crude” indicates that the space is defined with minimal effort, in this case, by a row of small limestone rubble that runs across the width of the bench. The area of the “shrine” is defined by the row of stones. Within the feature is a large charred portion of plaster.

The back room of Str. 732 had a dirt floor and its back wall was defined by a crude row of stones, probably foundation slabs. In the southwestern part of the building, intermediate between the front and back room, was a low rectangular platform similar to the one described in Str. 664.

Several test units were excavated into the fill of Str. 732 and its patio. These units suggested the patio and residence were not built upon earlier structures. Unit 103, 115, located off the edge of the patio, encountered a human burial (Figure 9-45). The

individual was tightly flexed in a seated position and may have been wrapped in a bundle. The head was to the south and the individual faced north. No grave goods were found with the interment. An osteological analysis has not yet been conducted, but the individual appears to be a child. This form of burial appears similar to that of the Chinamita, an ethnic group located northwest of the Petén lakes region, described as follows: “The roped corpse, with knees bent and face over the knees, was placed upright with food offerings in a round hole” (Thompson 1977: 13).

#### Artifacts Distributions of Group 732

Like Group 719, Group 732 appears to have been suddenly abandoned with many artifacts left in situ. Corresponding with Str. 719, utilitarian artifacts, such as non-censer ceramics, tended to be concentrated in the back room. Additional concentrations of these artifacts were found in secondary refuse deposits located southwest of the base of the patio and adjacent to the end of the north wing of the L-shaped bench. Miscellaneous shell, bone, most chert and obsidian artifacts, mano and metate fragments, and non-censer ceramics (Figures 9-46 and 9-47) were included in these concentrations. Obsidian blades were found in these areas, but were found throughout the rest of the building as well. Net weights were also found in the major utilitarian concentrations, but a large number was found on Str. 1004 (Figure 9-48). The majority of human and animal teeth found in the excavation were in the concentration at the end of the north wing of the bench. The other such artifacts were dispersed through the structure.

Two in situ Mumul Composite spiked censers were found in Str. 732 (Figure 9-49). One was encountered on the northwest corner of low rectangular platform intermediate between the front and back room. This censer contained incense resin,

which was submitted for AMS dating (AA35236) (Table 1-1) and determined to have a Conventional Age of  $426 \pm 30$  BP, calibrated to A.D. 1423 to 1509 and A.D. 1601 to 1613 (2 sigma, 95% probability). The second censer was located in the small shrine on the southeastern end of the bench. As in Str. 719, the area around the doorway between the front and back room appears to have been the place of ritual activity. Burnt plaster inside the shrine suggests the burning of offerings without censers. La Justa/Extranjeras Composite censer sherds were found scattered across the excavated area. One deposit of interest occurred in the area of 413, 100 (Figure 9-50). Co-occurring with these sherds were a small greenstone/serpentine axe, two chert bifaces, and two quartz crystals. These items were either secondary refuse from ritual activities or a superficial cache. A miniature cup sherd was found north of this concentration.

Isolated sherds from Classic and Postclassic period image censers were found in Str. 732. Despite the lack of in situ image censers, an image censer face mold was found just north of the altar in the front room, suggesting the production of such vessels. This mold made censers of the smaller variety, likely Kulut Modeled. Two animal claws or talons were encountered near the censer mold.

#### Domestic Group 747

The domestic group centered upon Str. 747 is located on the hilltop that lies in the center of Group E. The hilltop was artificially flattened to form a plazuela that has an area of approximately 390 m<sup>2</sup>. In the plazuela stand Str. 747, a house, and Str. 748, a low platform (Figures 9-51 and 9-52). The edges of the plazuela are steep, dropping 4 m to artificially leveled areas to its south and northwest where several other Late Postclassic/

Contact period houses rest. Time constraints did not allow the investigation of the entire plazuela, therefore, excavations focused upon the two structures. All of the masonry of both Str. 747 and St. 748 is comprised of hard limestone rubble. The grid utilized in the investigation of Domestic Group 747 was aligned with the orientation of interior wall of Str. 747 and was oriented 17° east of north.

#### Architectural Composition of Str. 747

Str. 747 is the central house of the domestic group. It is tandem shaped building with an L-shaped bench resting on the western side of the plazuela facing to the east at an angle of 107° east of north. A 193 m<sup>2</sup> excavation uncovered 100% of Str. 747.

Str. 747 rests on a low platform with the south wall of the superstructure forming its southern edge. The eastern edge of the platform is built of a single course of small to medium-sized squared rubble blocks. The base of the southern part of this wall was constructed directly upon bedrock. The eastern wall of the superstructure rests 30 cm west of the east face of the platform leaving a decorative basal molding, which was capped by a plaster surface. The northern and western edges stand on the edge of the domestic group and also line the edge of the plaza platform. The northern wall of the superstructure lies south of the northern face of the platform, providing a large flat surface or external bench. Another exterior bench was added to the south wall of the platform/ superstructure. While this feature was not part of the platform, it provided a usable surface similar to that encountered on the northern side of the platform and made the plan of the building more symmetrical.

The superstructure of Str. 747 is enclosed by three exterior walls leaving the building open on the east side. Dividing the interior of the enclosure formed by the three

exterior walls is an interior wall that splits the building, creating a front room and back room. The front room of Str. 747 was enclosed by the north, south, and interior walls, but open to the east. The front room has a relatively well-preserved plaster floor resting 40 cm above the surface of the plazuela. It was accessed by a small outset stairway with three steps. The front room has an L-shaped bench in its northern half. Large patches of plaster remain on the bench demonstrating that its surface lay 26 cm above the floor of the front room.

The large back room of Str. 747 is enclosed by the north, south, and west exterior walls and the interior wall. Most of the surface was not plastered, but a small portion of plaster surface was encountered in the southeast corner of the room. Parts of the plastered area were charred. This patch of plaster surface is anomalous among the houses of Zacpetén because most do not have plaster surfaces in the back room. In the back room were two metates standing on end, leaning against one another, and possibly embedded in the floor (Fea. 747-1). The two metates may simply have been stored in this manner when not in use; however, a similar feature was found in Str. 719. In addition, it was found along the medial axis of the structure.

In front of Str. 747 lay two posthole features excavated into bedrock. The line formed by these two features is perpendicular to the eastern edge of Str. 747. These postholes were excavated into bedrock because the soil is extremely shallow in this area. No other postholes were encountered in front of Str. 747 because the soil was too disturbed by roots to allow such a feature to be discerned. It is obvious, however, that the thatched roof of Str. 764 extended at least 1.2 m from the eastern edge of the platform and was supported by perishable posts.

### Previous Constructions of Str. 747

Eighteen units were excavated into the floor (Floor 1) of Str. 747 in order to follow the masonry of an earlier building encountered in the back room and search for subsurface features. Str. 747 was built upon an earlier construction (Figure 9-53). The masonry of the structure lay 7 to 16 cm below the level of the plaster surface in the southeast corner of Str. 747. The earlier building is oriented 100.3° east of north or 6.7° west of the later construction. The western edge of the remaining masonry of the earlier building is comprised of a single course limestone slabs. Resting on top of the low platform created by the slabs is a single course of unshaped blocks. No other masonry walls were encountered which might have suggested the size of the superstructure or the direction it faced.

Test Unit 702, 199 (Figure 9-54), which was located in the front room, was excavated to bedrock. Upon the bedrock, which lay 2.2 m b.d., was a dark gray soil (Level 5) that most likely formed naturally as soil washed into cavities in the bedrock. Upon Level 5 was a fill layer of very light gray soil (Level 4b) capped by a plaster surface (Level 4a). Level 4a was associated with the earlier construction of Str. 747, described above. Both Levels 4 and 5 were dated to the Terminal Classic period. Above the first plaster surface was a ballast of light gray soil with limestone inclusions (Level 3b) upon which was constructed a second plaster surface, the latest floor of Str. 747.

### Architectural Composition of Str. 748

Str. 748 is located 3.3 m south of Str. 747. An 80 m<sup>2</sup> excavation block uncovered approximately 75% of the building. If the building faces the plazuela, it is oriented 100° east of north, which varies only +0.5° from the earlier construction of Str. 747, but -7° of

the later building; hence, Str. 748 was likely associated with the earlier construction of Str. 747. In fact, the line of limestone blocks built upon the platform formed by the slabs that lay beneath Str. 747 is almost exactly in line with the west wall of Str. 748, perhaps defining the back edges of buildings that lined an earlier plazuela. Excavations revealed an addition on the southern side of Str. 748. The first construction will be referred to as Str. 748A and the addition as Str. 748B.

Str. 748A is a low platform built adjacent to an earlier western edge of the plazuela. The northern edge of Str. 748A had no masonry and it may have been robbed for other constructions, perhaps the latest version of Str. 747. The western edge of Str. 748A is formed by coursed limestone rubble. Str. 748A has an uneven, heavily disturbed surface. The fill was composed of small stones without a substantial soil matrix, which differs significantly from the latest soil fill of Str. 747 and the other late constructions at Zacpetén. No evidence of a plaster surface or a superstructure was encountered on top of the exposed fill. This surface seems to have been exposed to the elements much longer than Str. 747 and part of its fill may have been borrowed for the latter. Str. 748B was an L-shaped addition to the southern side of Str. 748A. Its surface 20 cm below the surface of Str. 748A and was filled with a light gray soil with limestone inclusions. A plaster surface associated with Str. 748A was found beneath Str. 748B.

#### Previous Constructions of Str. 748

Test Unit 687, 199 (Figure 9-55) was a 1 x 1 m unit excavated in the center of Str. 748A until it reached bedrock. The bedrock at the base of the unit was undulating and ranged from 2.65 to 3.23 b.d. Upon the bedrock was decomposed limestone (Level 7) followed by a Terminal Classic fill layer of medium to large random rubble (Level 6c)

some with fragments of stucco adhered to their surfaces. The fill was capped by a ballast of dark gray soil with limestone inclusions (Level 6b) upon which was built a thick Terminal Classic period plaster floor (Level 6a) which has since eroded considerably. The surface of this floor was covered by a fill composed of medium-sized stones in a matrix of reddish-brown soil (Level 5) followed by a ballast of small stones in a very light gray soil matrix (Level 4b). The ballast was covered by a thin plaster floor (Level 4a) dating to the Early Postclassic period. This surface must be related to that which lay at the same depth to the south of and beneath Str. 748B. Both appear to be part of the lower terrace of an earlier plazuela. Upon this surface were placed small stones in a soil matrix (Level 3) which is the early Late Postclassic fill of Str. 748A.

#### Artifact Distributions of Str. 747 and 748

The back room of Str. 747 was the location of various activities. Miscellaneous ceramic sherds (Figure 9-56), bone, and shell; obsidian blades and corner notched points; manos/mano fragments; and net weights were primarily located in the back room. A complete utilitarian jar was found northwest of Fea. 747-1. Mixed with the jar sherds were 45 net-weights made of worked sherds (Figure 9-57). In addition to net-weights, wood fragment were found within the vessel. The wood was dated with AMS analysis (Beta-112317) (Table 1-1) and determined to have a Conventional Age of  $370 \pm 30$  BP, calibrated to A.D. 1447 to 1528 and A.D. 1552 to 1632 (2 sigma, 95% probability).

The front room of Str. 747 was relatively clean of artifacts. A light concentration of miscellaneous sherds was located in the front room just south of the bench and north of the door to the back room (Figure 9-58). Correlated with the latter sherd concentration was a high frequency of obsidian debitage/flakes and miscellaneous bone and shell; an

obsidian core, two chert cores, and two chert corner notched points. A second concentration of lithics (Figure 9-59) was found in the area of 698, 200 in the front room. This scatter included chert debitage/flakes, blades, and cores; a chert lance/knife point and corner notched point. These two small scatters deviate from the typically “clean” front room. Both appear to be the result of lithic production. The front room of Str. 747 did not contain concentrations of censer sherds.

Two small miscellaneous sherd concentrations were encountered in front of Str. 747. One concentration was found in the northeast corner and the other in the southeast corner. Aside from these concentrations, the portion of the plazuela immediately adjacent to Str. 747 was relatively clean.

Overall, the artifacts discovered in the back room of Str. 747 reveal it was the central interior space of domestic activities. The front room was relatively clean, but two concentrations of lithic artifacts with cores and debitage suggest production activities.

No in situ primary depositions of artifacts were encountered in or around Str. 748. However, a great deal of secondary refuse, including charcoal, animal bones, and fresh-water snail shell were recovered against the west face of Str. 748A. A similar but lighter deposit was recovered along the south face of Str. 748B.

### Domestic Group 758

Domestic Group 758 is located on the side of a hill 40 m south of the ceremonial core of Group C. The group includes a residence, Str. 758, with a patio to its east. The patio blends into the hill to its north, but south of Str. 758 it slopes downward 24°, dropping 4.5 m. Excavations were concentrated upon Str. 758. A 71 m<sup>2</sup> excavation

block oriented 4.5° east of north was utilized to investigate 95% of the building.

Str. 758 (Figures 9-60 and 9-61) is not very well preserved and appears to have been poorly constructed as well. The building may have once been wider, but the southern end is eroding off the edge of the patio. A line of large limestone slabs defines the east wall of the platform, but the structure continues north of the termination of the stones. A disturbed stairway or a platform lay at the northern end of the eastern platform.

The superstructure covers the entire building platform. The foundation stones of the west wall of the superstructure are all that remain of the exterior walls of Str. 758. The absence of wall bases and collapse suggests that the walls were perishable. The most salient masonry feature within Str. 758 is the bench; however, relative to the other benches excavated at Zacpetén, it is small and poorly constructed. It was once longer, but the southern end is eroded and the northern end was clipped by an earlier test pit. The eastern face is composed of a single course of medium-sized vertical slabs. The masonry of the other faces is collapsed beyond recognition. The orientation of the bench demonstrates that Str. 758 faces toward the patio, 78° east of north. On the eastern side of the bench lies a large patch of preserved plaster on the surface of the floor. The bench defines the border between the front and back rooms of Str. 758. A perishable partition most likely lined the western edge of the bench

#### Previous Constructions of Str. 758

Six units excavated into the platform and patio of Str. 758 revealed bedrock less than a meter beneath the structure. Earlier masonry and plaster constructions were not encountered, but Early Postclassic fill underlay the Late Postclassic period construction (Figure 9-62) and may have been borrowed from an abandoned building or refuse area.

### Artifact Distributions of Str. 758

Substantial *in situ* artifact deposits were not found within Str. 758, but traces of activities were revealed. Miscellaneous ceramic sherds (Figure 9-63) and net-weights were primarily encountered to the west of the bench, in the back room. Concentrations of chert debitage/flakes were found in the back room and south of the rectangular masonry feature. A chert core was found with the latter. Non-image censer sherds were weakly concentrated between the bench and rectangular masonry feature (Figure 9-64). They were also found behind (to the west of) the residence. A single quartz crystal was also encountered on the rectangular feature. This feature seems to correspond with the similar construction in Str. 732. A complete ceramic mold used to create faces of small effigy censers was discovered in the back room of the structure. The reverse side of the mold was decorated with the incised depiction of a human skull. A similar object was encountered in Str. 732. Both of the molds demonstrate that censers were made in domestic contexts, but no image censer sherds were found in Str. 758. Furthermore, censer production areas are yet to be discerned. All other artifacts were distributed across the surface without clearly discernible patterns.

The lack of *in situ* domestic artifacts such as complete ceramic vessels, manos, and metates suggests the building was not rapidly abandoned. Alternatively, the occupants may have simply been able to carry most of their possessions with them.

### Residences Discussion

The five residences and four associated buildings excavated at Zacpetén were selected to sample a variety of residential locations, sizes, and group types. Despite

these possible indicators of social variation, the residences had many shared characteristics in regard to both form and artifact distributions; however, there were also differences between the buildings that seem correlated with social status (Table 9-1).

### The Zacpetén Residential Template

The basic shape of all five excavated houses at Zacpetén was a tandem structure on a low building platform. In the front of each structure was a bench that was L-shaped in three structures and straight in the other two. The three structures with L-shaped benches had an interior masonry wall lining the rear of the bench dividing the building into a front room and a back room. It is assumed that the two other buildings had perishable interior walls. The benches and floors of the front rooms in all residences with L-shaped benches and one of the structures with a straight bench were covered with plaster, while the back room had a dirt floor. The other structure with a straight bench did not appear to have a plastered front room. In three of the residences, a small masonry rectangle stood opposite the bench with the door between the front room and back room standing between the two features. In the two cases where the masonry rectangle was not present, the interior wall continued dividing the side of the residence without a bench. Two structures had a feature constructed of two or three metates embedded into the floor in the center of the back room. All structures, regardless of their size or quality, had certain basic shared features, but variation exists and appears related to social status.

When the various architectural features of each house are tabulated and the houses are arranged according to the internal area of the residence, a clear pattern is evident (Table 9-1). The largest two houses, Strs. 719 and 747, have all of the features mentioned above, except the masonry rectangle. Str. 732 has the rectangular rectangle,

but lacks the metate feature and the continued interior wall. The remaining two structures, Strs. 664 and 758 have the rectangular feature, but lack interior or any other sort of masonry walls, and have simpler straight benches. Str. 758 also lacks a plastered front room. While the area of residential space might not always be a good indicator of social status, it certainly correlates with the presence and absence of specific features.

Str. 719 is by far the largest and most elaborate residence and its bench is painted, a quality noted of elite houses in the Colonial Period (Landa 1941: 85-87). Such houses were described as having a wall dividing the house "lengthwise." The front room was covered with plaster and used as a social area and sleeping place for guests and the occupants slept in the back room and. The houses of elites were better constructed and built by communal labor. The plastered front rooms of such houses were elaborately painted. Elite houses in Colonial period Petén were similarly described. The house of Ajaw Kan Ek' had an plastered anteroom for the reception of visitors on the front of his house (Jones 1998: 71).

Str. 719 is partially constructed of soft cut limestone from Classic period constructions, some of which is incorporated into dividers in the bench. Its domestic group also has elaborate ceremonial buildings. People of higher status seem to have been able to fulfill the majority of their residential construction goals; therefore, higher status residences were the most complete representations of the archetypical residence. However, this does not explain the presence of the low rectangular platform in the smaller and less well constructed dwellings. These might have been shrines similar to Str. 720 in Domestic Group 719 and also seem to match the placement of masonry tables in open halls. As will be mentioned in Chapter 10, Strs. 720 and 721, ceremonial

buildings associated with Str. 719, seem to correspond with god houses and statue shrines of public temple assemblages.

### Patterns in Residential Activity Areas

Residences at Zacpetén were the locations of various activities ranging from everyday tasks to the performance of ritual. While occupants were from a range of social classes, several repeated patterns were discerned in the excavations of residences at Zacpetén. Occasional variance from patterned behaviors was found and the recognized patterns were very general; hence, one should not interpret patterned behavior as strictly involuntary. Instead, the patterns were likely the result of an orderly and predictable existence. The presence of variance suggests innovation, resistance, or forgotten knowledge, all parts of the process through which habitual behaviors change through time. The present section will focus on repeated patterns rather than deviations in order to illuminate structured domestic practices at Zacpetén, but one must keep in mind that structured behaviors can change.

The front rooms of all five residences excavated at Zacpetén were relatively clean of artifacts involved in subsistence and production. The fact that these areas were generally covered by stucco indicates a greater amount of energy invested in their physical appearance. Effort had obviously been made to make these areas more visually appealing. Furthermore, refuse on the plastered surface must have been easier to discern than in the back room and the smooth plaster was easier to sweep than the dirt floor of the back room because small objects are not as easily lodged in the floor. The presence of cut soft limestone borrowed from Classic period constructions in the front room, but not in the back room of Str. 719 attests to the visual importance of this area.

In three of the five excavated residences, the primary activity evident in the front room was the use of censers in domestic ceremonial areas. Strs. 719, 732, and 758 all had evidence of such activities, in the form of non-image censers in the front room close to the door leading to the back room. Furthermore, interior shrines lay in the front rooms of Strs. 732 and 719 and low masonry rectangles rested near the door opposite the bench in Strs. 664, 732, and 758, the latter two associated with non-image censer sherds. These seem to have defined some sort of ritual space, perhaps shrines similar to Str. 720. On the other hand, the long end of L-shaped benches at Mayapán usually extended across the entire front room with a break allowing entrance into the back room (see Smith 1962: Figure 2-8), while in two elite residences at Zacpetén (Strs. 719 and 747), the bench ended at the entrance to the back room. It is possible that the masonry rectangles in smaller residences were vestigial, though enlarged and displaced, remnants of the features at Mayapán. While Str. 719 did not have such a feature, numerous non-image censers and other artifacts rested upon the interior wall in the parallel location. Str. 719 also had an *in situ* Kulut Modeled image censer and tapir mandible in the interior shrine of its front room, but no such objects were found in any of the other residences.

Since the front room was open, the ritual activities that occurred in this area were visible to the outside. The benches in all the front rooms imply sitting and their sizes suggest the presence of more than one individual; hence socializing. As mentioned, the use of the front room of the house as a social area is described in historical documents. The majority of the ritual activities, as primarily evidenced by censer use, within the residence occurred in the front room public space near the entrance into the back room.

The back room appears to have been the place of domestic production and the

family living space. In all five residences, non-censer ceramics were concentrated within the back room against the interior wall. Most lithic artifacts, manos and metates, miscellaneous bone and shell, and net weights were also found in the back room; however, they were concentrated in various areas. Of course, these objects were also found in refuse areas outside the residence, but within it they were usually contained within the back room.

All household groups contained numerous small chert and obsidian corner notched projectile points. This is partly the result of the surface-clearing field strategy, which produced a total of 393 such points. However, while household excavations involved only 25% of the total number of 1 x 1 m units, they produced 51% (N=202) of the total number of points. In Strs 719, 732, and possibly 747, most points were found in the back room, but in Str. 664, almost all were located on the patio. Given their size, these artifacts were likely used as arrow points. Such points could have been used in warfare, but it seems likely that most points found in domestic contexts were used in hunting rather than home invasion.

The back room was family space hidden from outside view and the place of domestic activities. The front room was open, the space of visitations and ritual activities. The Northern Lacandon ritualize social interactions in the domestic structure with visitors remaining near the entrance and hosts with their backs turned toward to guests. In tandem structures at Zacpetén, a similar behavior is evident, but in this case, an intermediate social area, the front room, is placed between the outside world and domestic space. The doorway from public space to domestic space is clearly the focus of ritual activity. Of course, here the ritual activity is religious rather than social; however,

the overlapping of social boundaries and supernatural boundaries is a common occurrence. The front room was not purely public space as it is likely that one must have first gained permission before passing into the household patio or plaza as is often the case in houses throughout the world. There appear to be various levels of access to the center of domestic space. If the pattern follows that of the Lacandon, it is doubtful that anyone other than family members would have entered the back room of the residence.

If one can generalize that the majority of maize grinding was conducted by females and the majority of lithic production or hunting was conducted by males, then the back room was both a female and male space. No evidence suggests the front room was predominantly associated with either gender. Domestic and public spaces within the residence were not divided into female and male spaces. Among the modern Maya of Oxkutzcab, the kitchen, which is usually in a separate structure, is primarily female space and the field is male space. Furthermore, boundaries of domestic space and fields are maintained by females and males, respectively, by sweeping or working in general (Hanks 1990: 329-364). If modern Maya gender roles can be projected into the past, kitchens were primarily female spaces and fields were male spaces. Neither of these gender-specific spaces was discerned in the residential excavations at Zacpetén.

Residences at Zacpetén follow that same basic front room/ back room pattern as Mayapán (Smith 1962: 230-231), but differ as well. While C-shaped benches are common at the latter site (see Smith 1962: Figures 2-10), none were found at Zacpetén. Residences at Mayapán sometimes have more than one chamber in the back “room,” but no such internal divisions were found at Zacpetén. Furthermore, many residences had “shrine rooms” as one of the divisions in the back “room” (Smith 1962: 191-202);

however, shrines at Zacpetén are located in the front room. The residential oratorios at Mayapán tend to have benches (Smith 1962: Fig 11), but Str. 721 does not. Domestic groups at the Yucatecan site often have more than one domestic structure, perhaps indicating extended families (Smith 1962: 206), but all of the excavated groups at Zacpetén lacked additional residences; therefore, the occupants might have followed a neolocal pattern. Domestic groups at Mayapán are defined by boundary walls (Bullard 1952; 1954), but those at Zacpetén are defined by patio borders.

Burials were commonly found in Mayapán domestic groups (Smith 232-255), but were rare in those of Zacpetén and cist burials were completely absent. It is possible that the “rarity” of burials resulted from patterning that was inadequately sampled. While numerous test units were placed into the residences, only three encountered burials and all three were found to the “right” (to the west if it faced south and to the east if it faced north) of the residence. The two groups that did not follow the patterning were not tested in the area to the “right” of the residence. The sampling was conducted to encounter Mayapán-like patterning (axial burials), which was not present in any residence. While a sample of three is certainly insufficient to clearly define burial patterns, it strongly suggests the possibility that burials tended to be located to the right of the residence.

All residences excavated at Zacpetén were tandem structures with a front and back room. Ritual performances occurred in the front room of the residence and in special ceremonial buildings. Group 719 differed from the other excavated groups as it had a god house and was the only domestic group with in situ god pots. As mentioned below, this group bears strong similarity to the two civic-ceremonial groups. The walls of the back room of residences enclosed a variety of both male and female domestic

activity areas. The size of residences corresponds well with the addition of certain architectural features and both were likely correlated with social status.

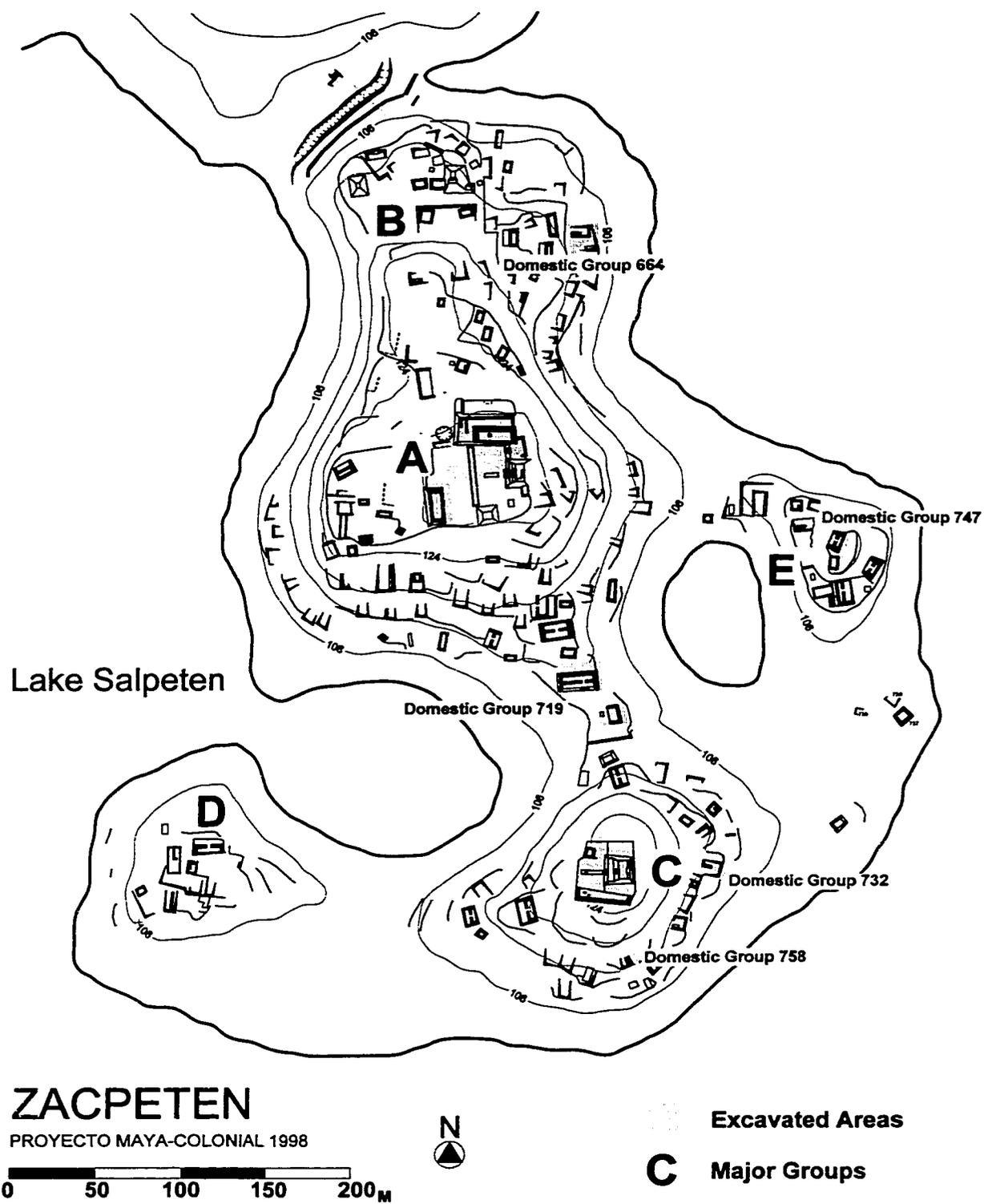


Figure 9-1. Zacpetén, Excavated Domestic Groups.

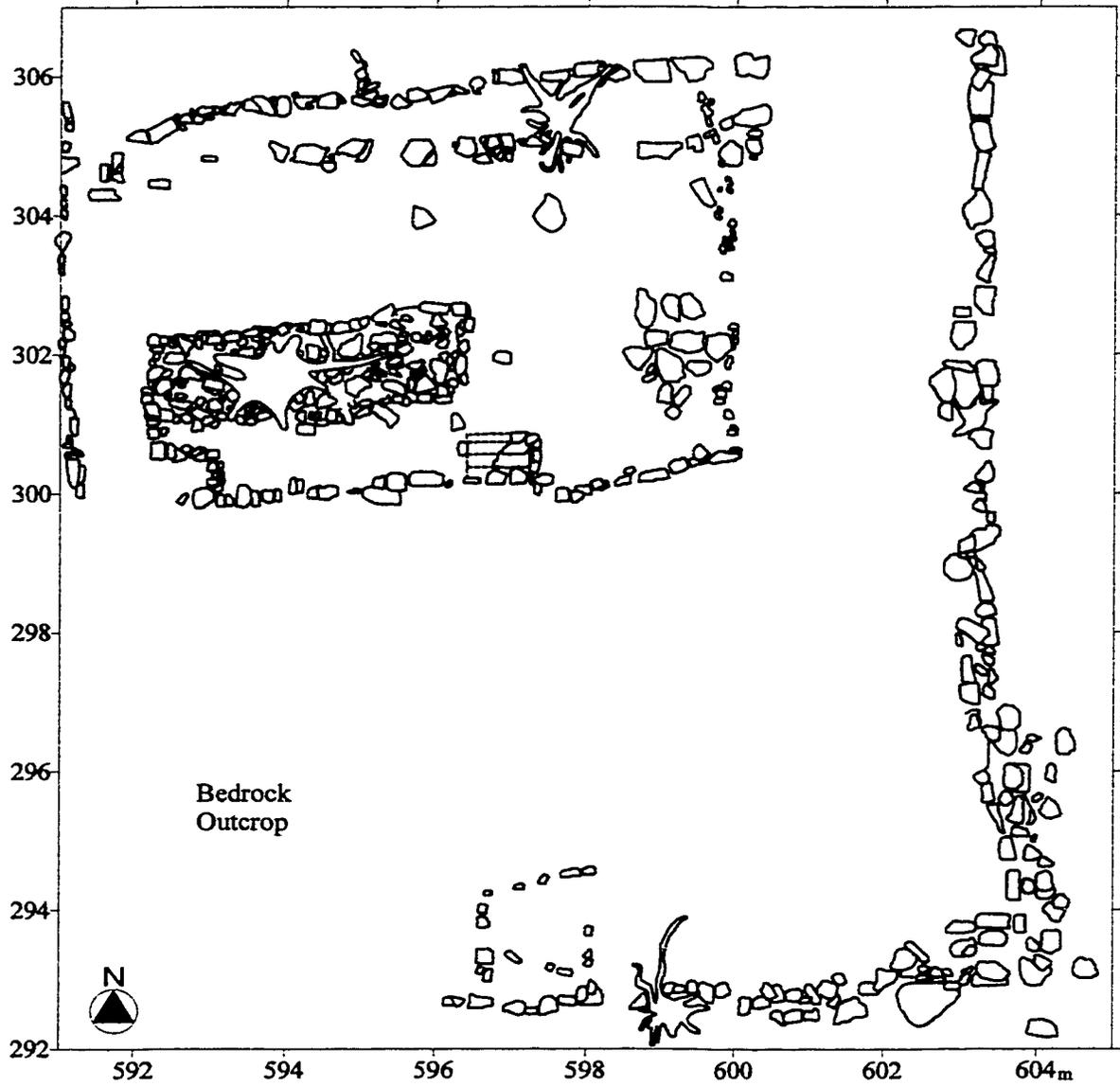


Figure 9-2. Zacpetén, Str. 664, Plan of Masonry.

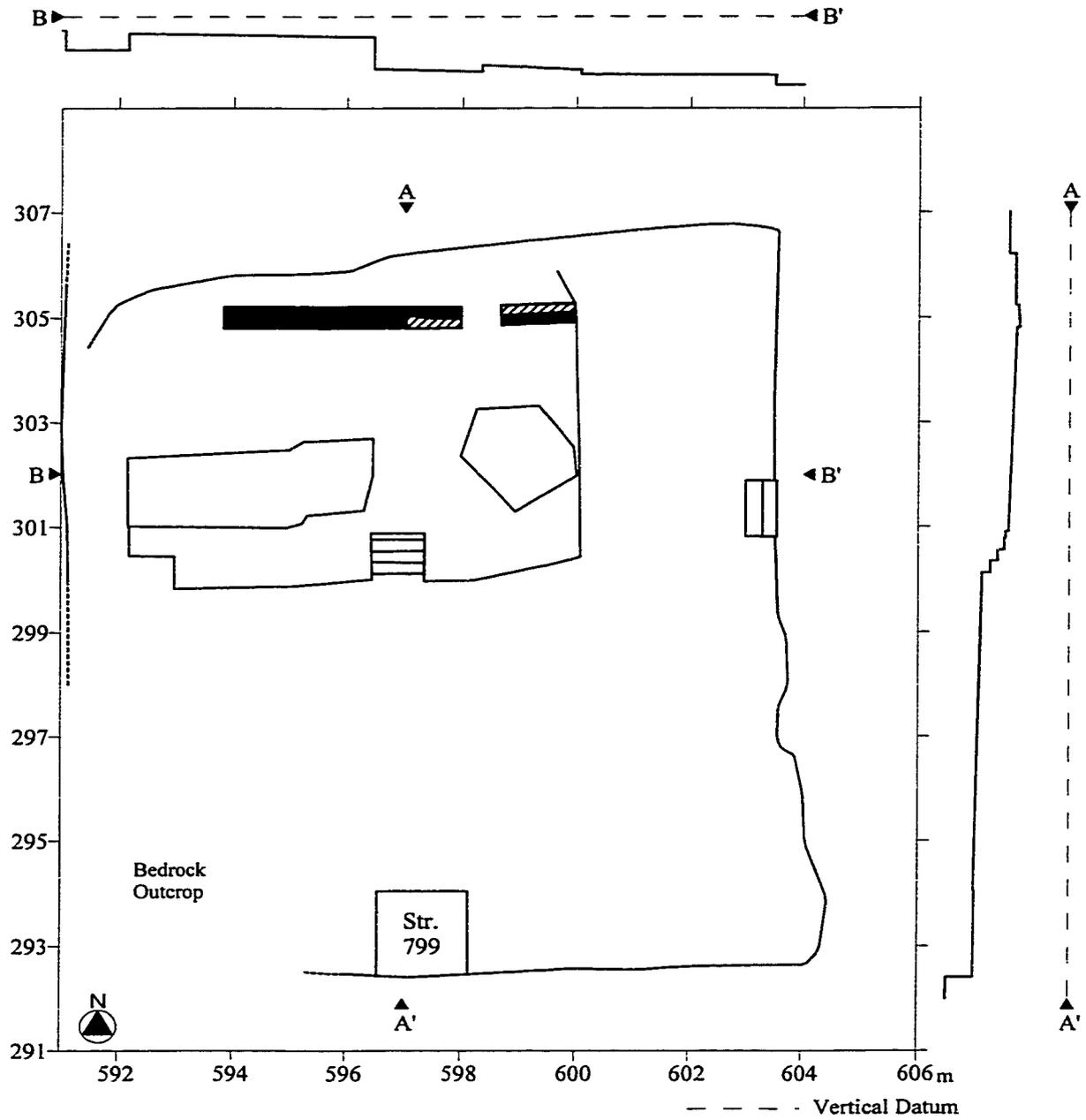


Figure 9-3. Zacpetén, Str. 664, Plan and Cross-Sections.

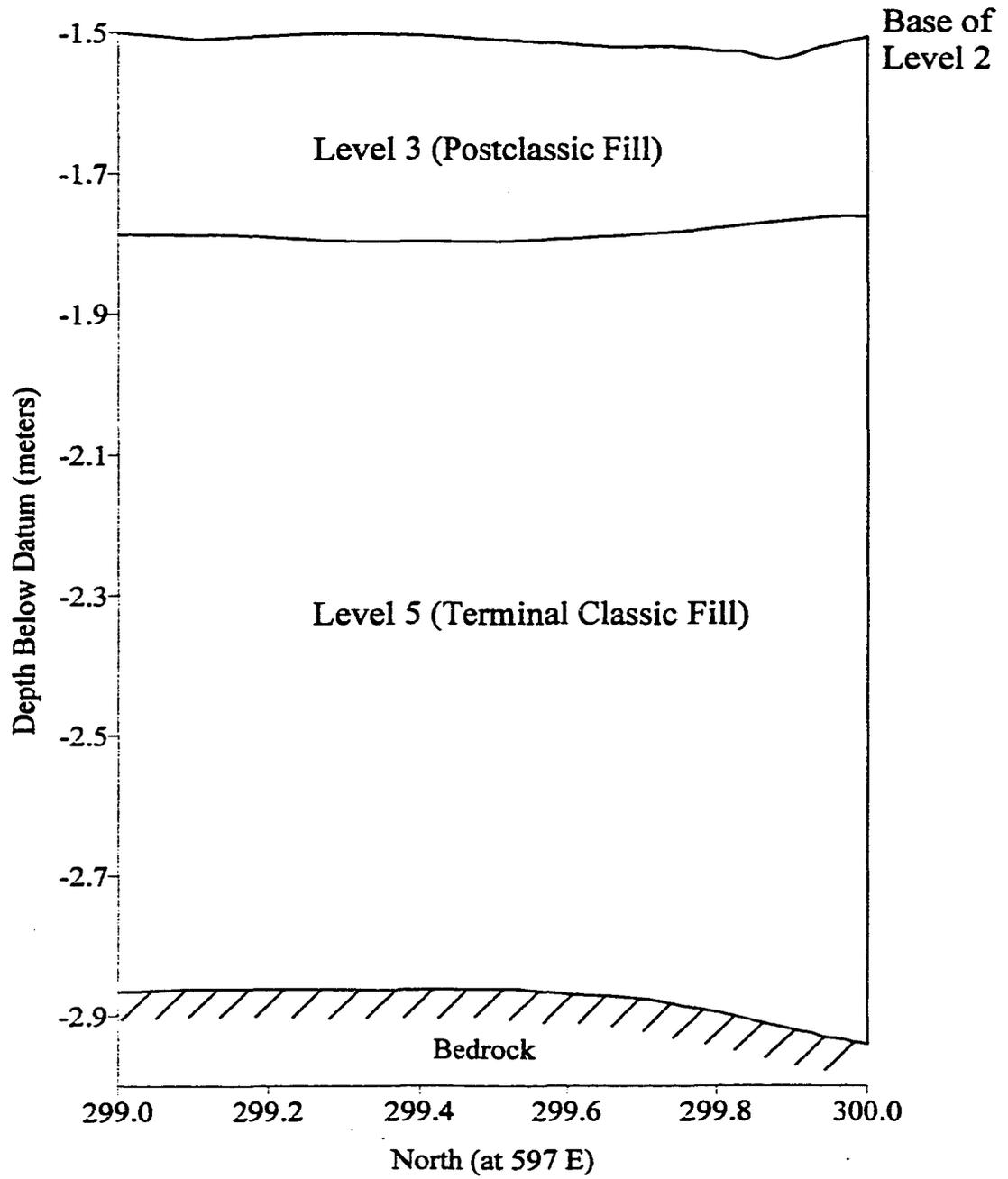


Figure 9-4. Zacpetén, Group 664, Test Unit 300, 597, West Profile.

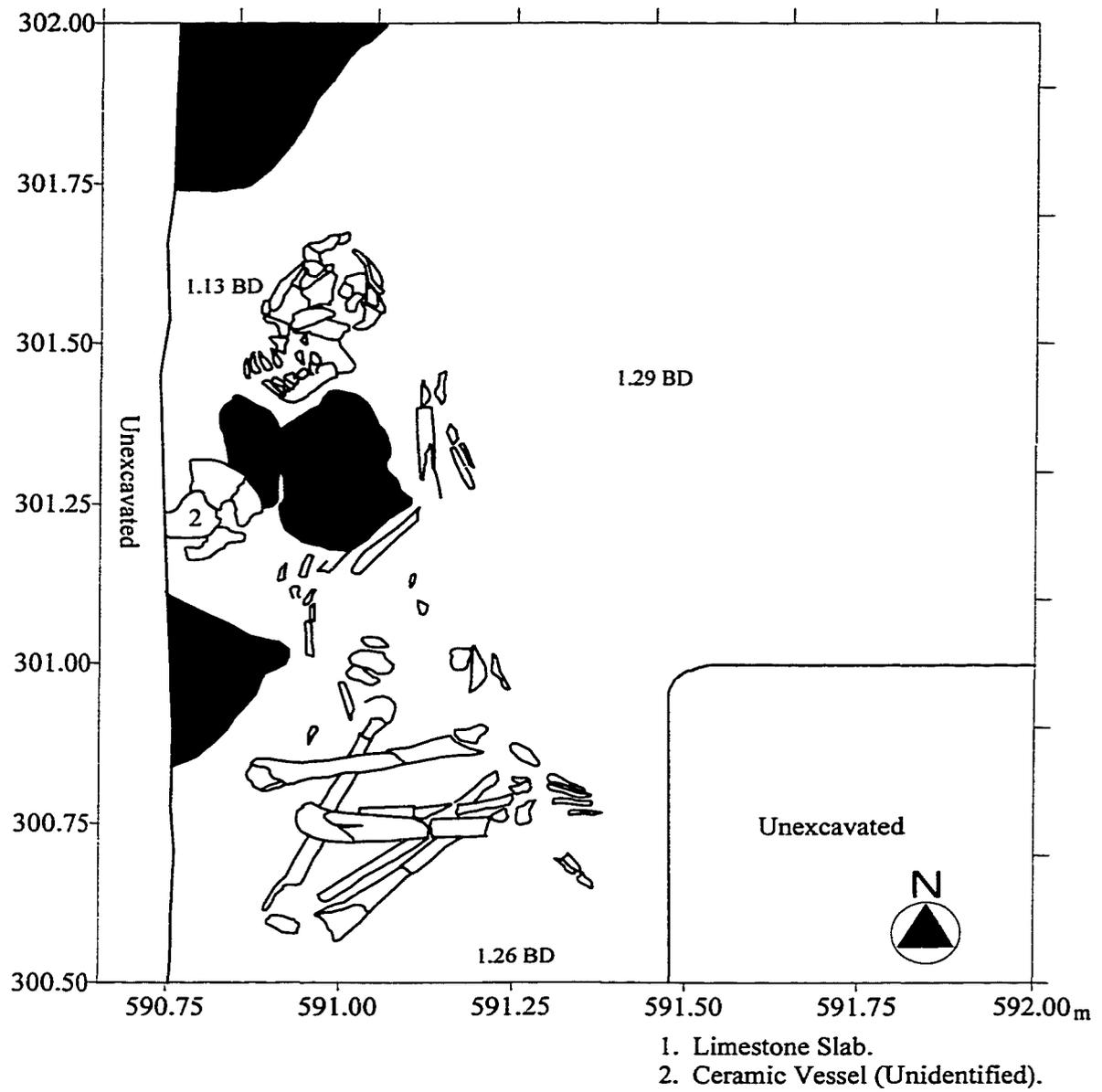


Figure 9-5. Zacpetén, Str. 664, Burial 664-1.

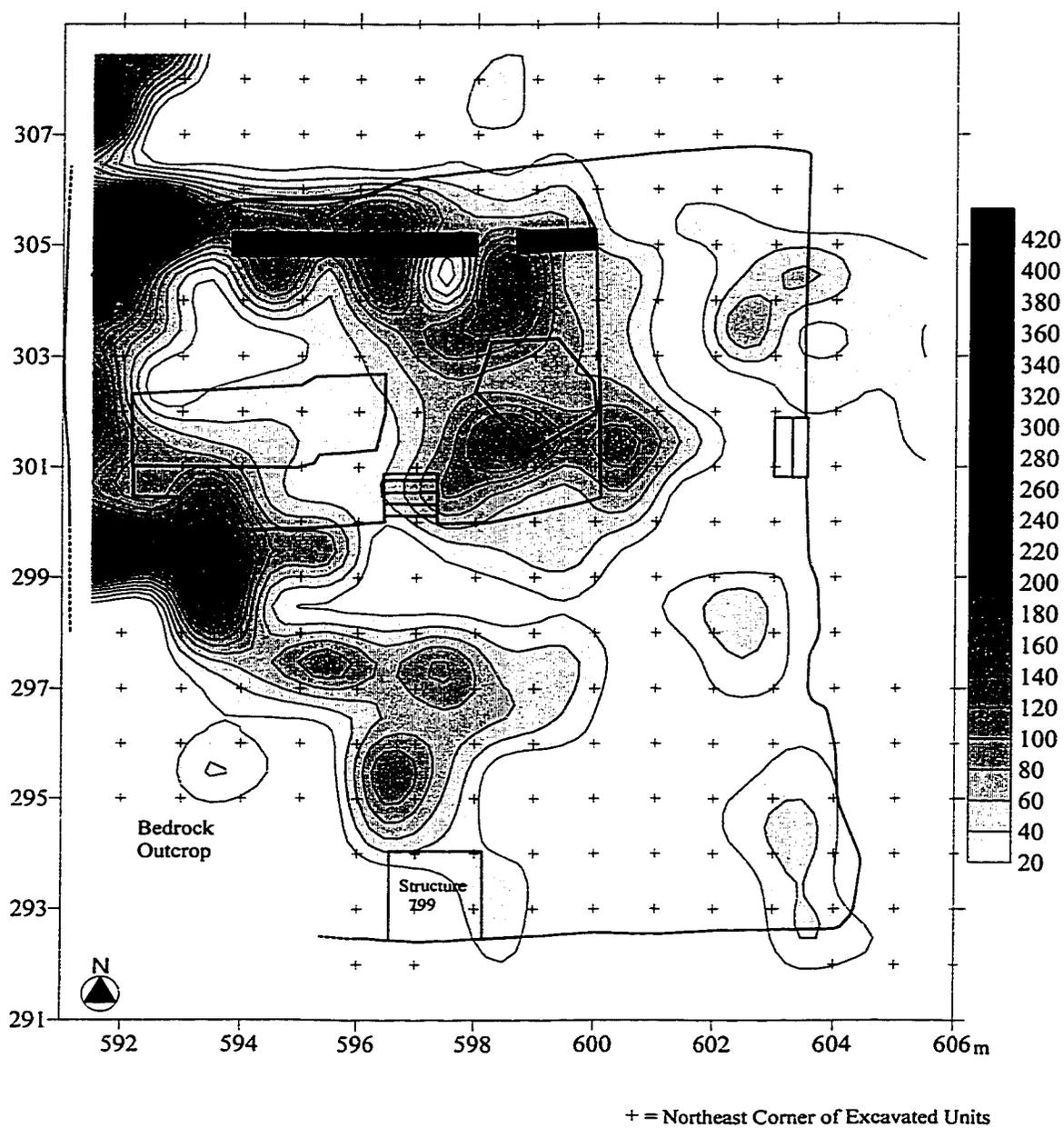
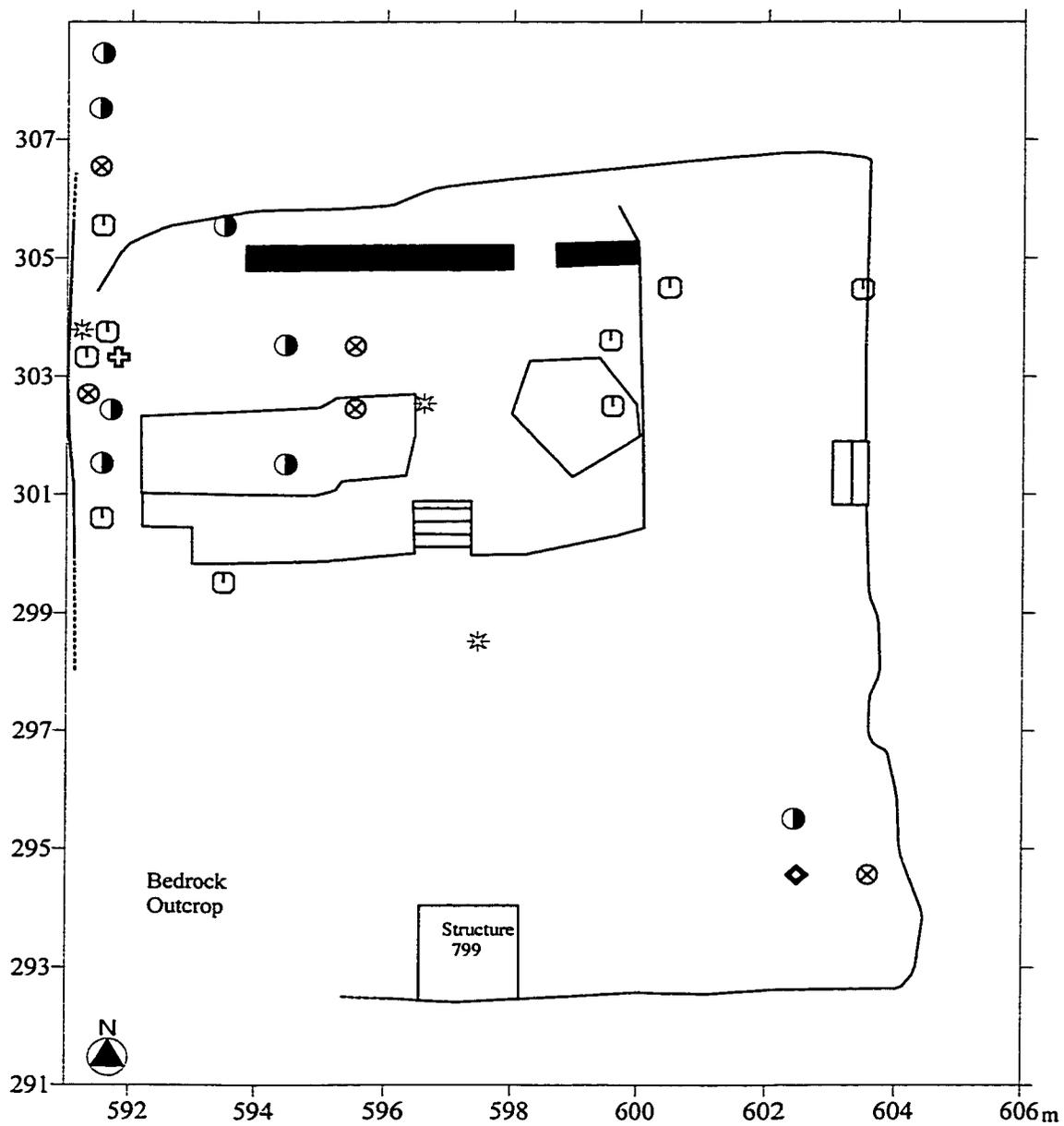


Figure 9-6. Zacpetén, Str. 664, Miscellaneous Ceramics.



MAP SYMBOLS:

- ◆ Greenstone, Miscellaneous
- Hammerstone, Chert
- ⊗ Mano/ Mano Fragment
- Metate/ Metate Fragment
- \* Uniface, Chert
- ⊕ Worked Stone, Misc.

Figure 9-7. Zacpetén, Str. 664, Uncommon Lithic Artifacts.

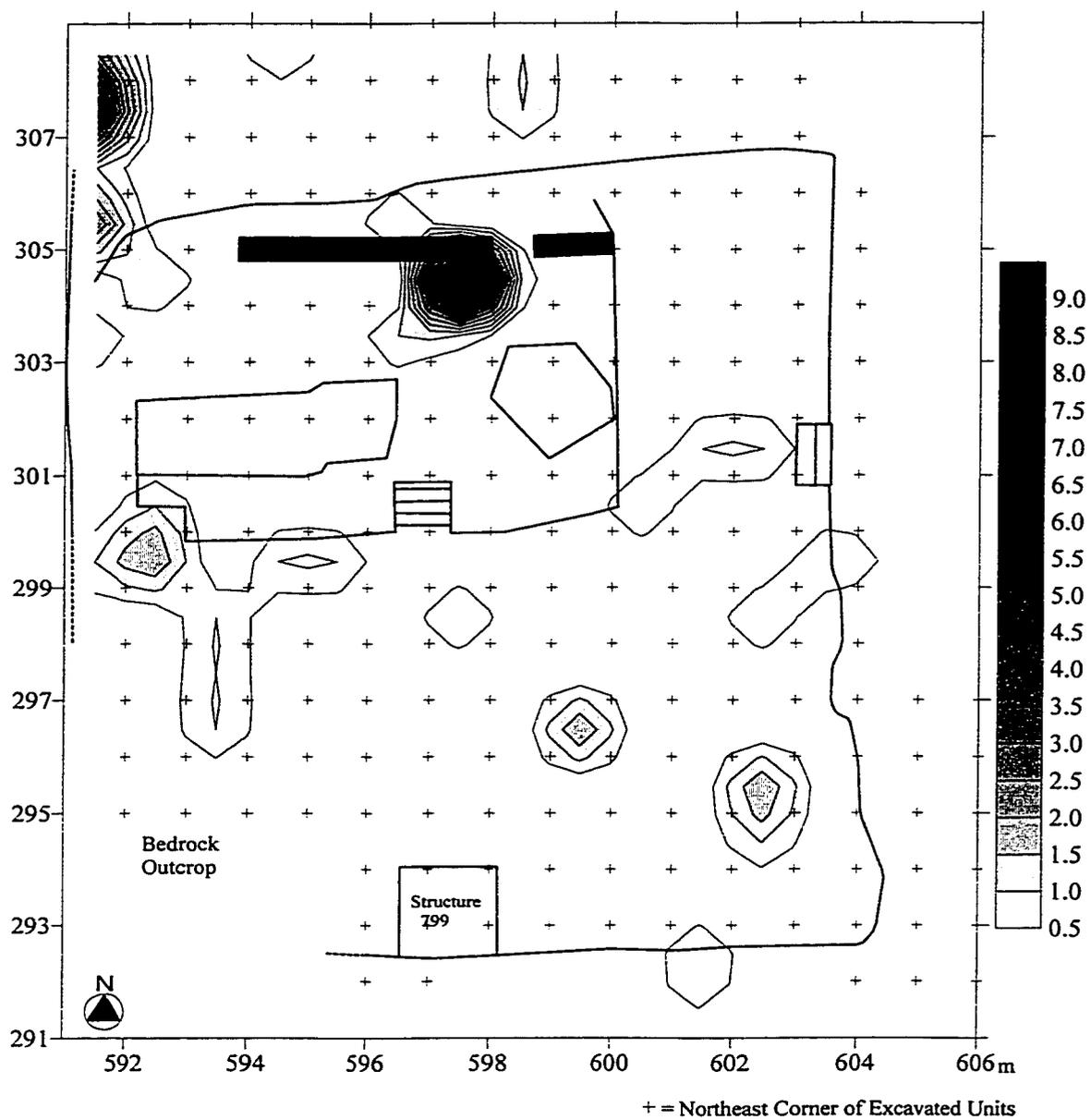


Figure 9-8. Zacpetén, Str. 664, Obsidian Debitage and Flakes.

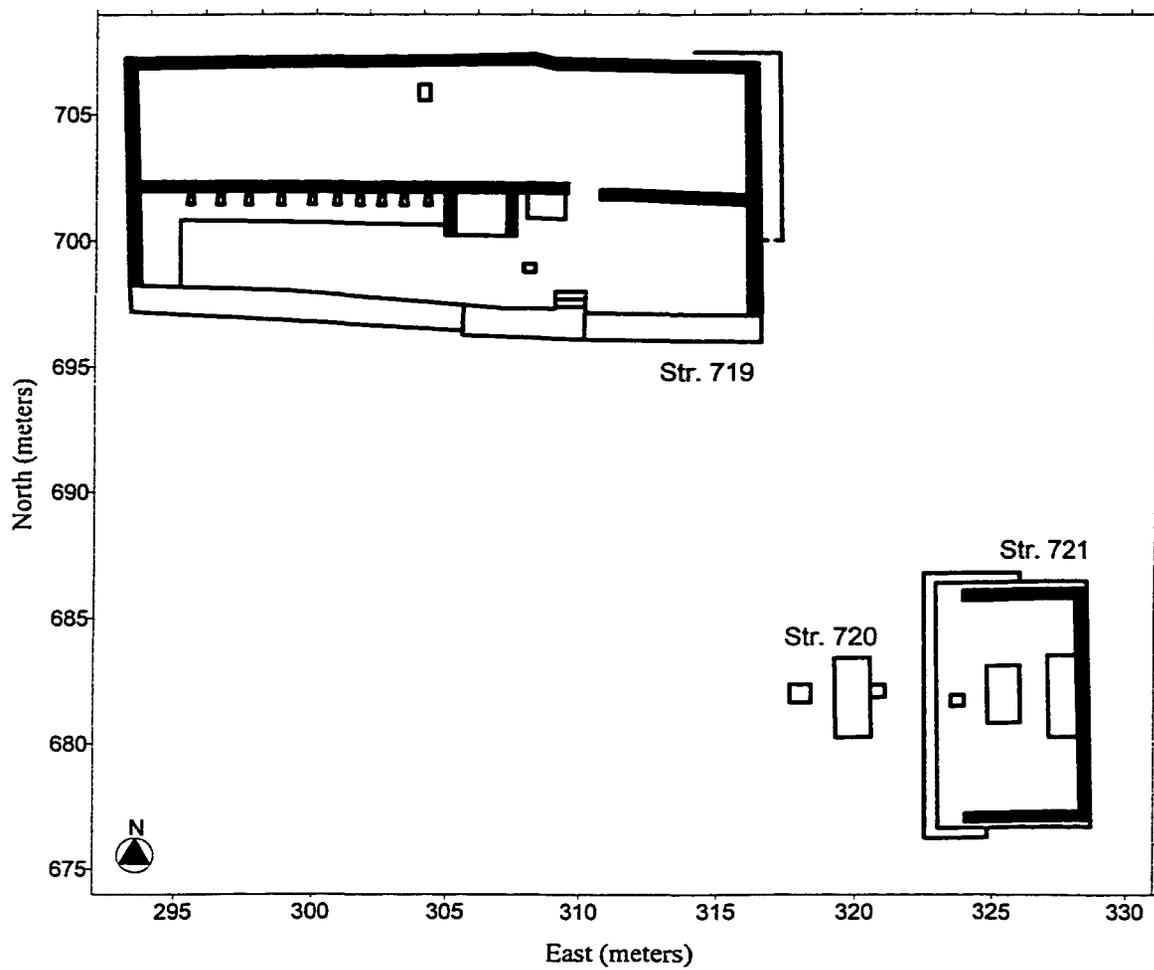


Figure 9-9. Zacpetén, Domestic Group 719.

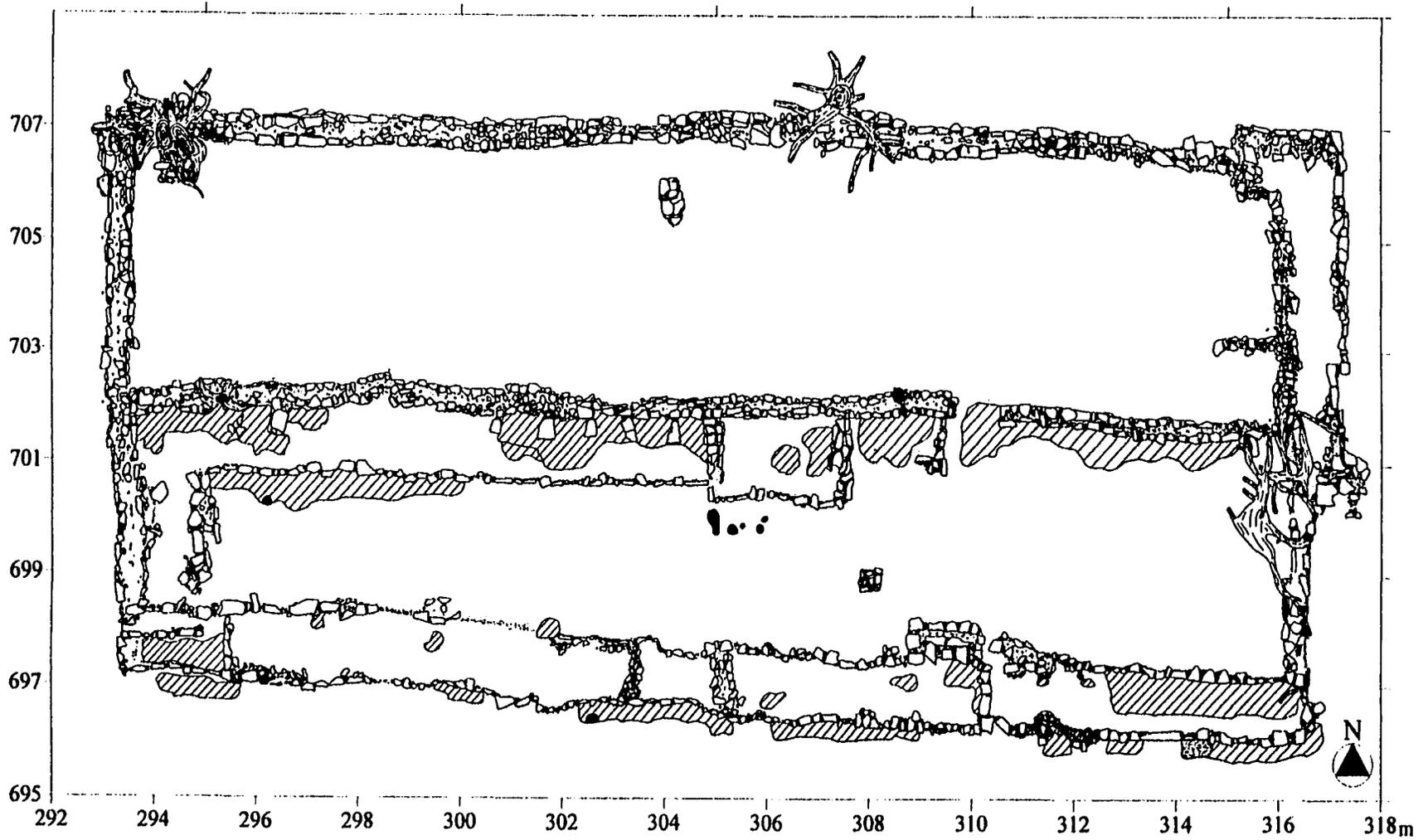


Figure 9-10. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

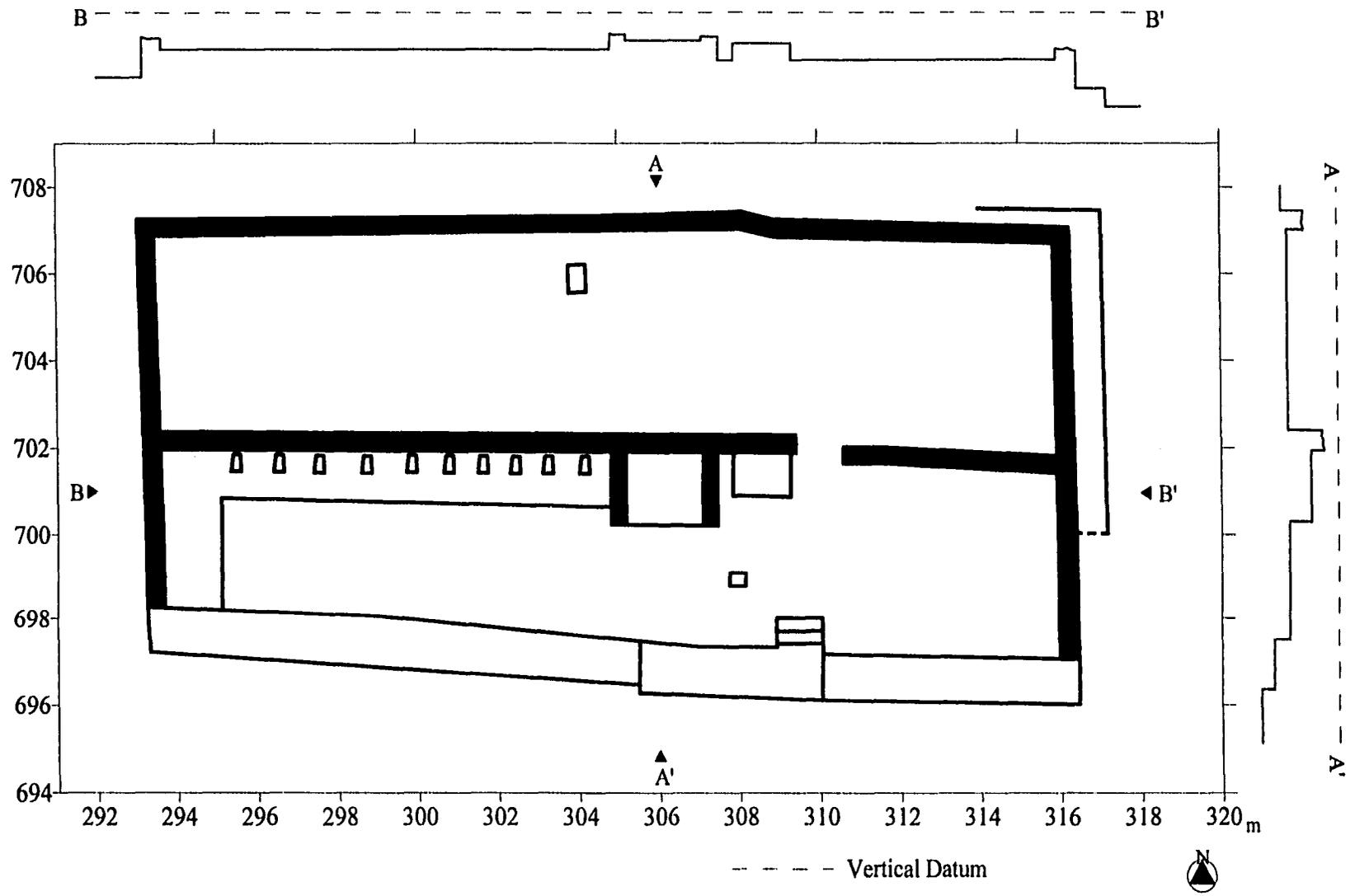


Figure 9-11. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Plan and Cross-Section.



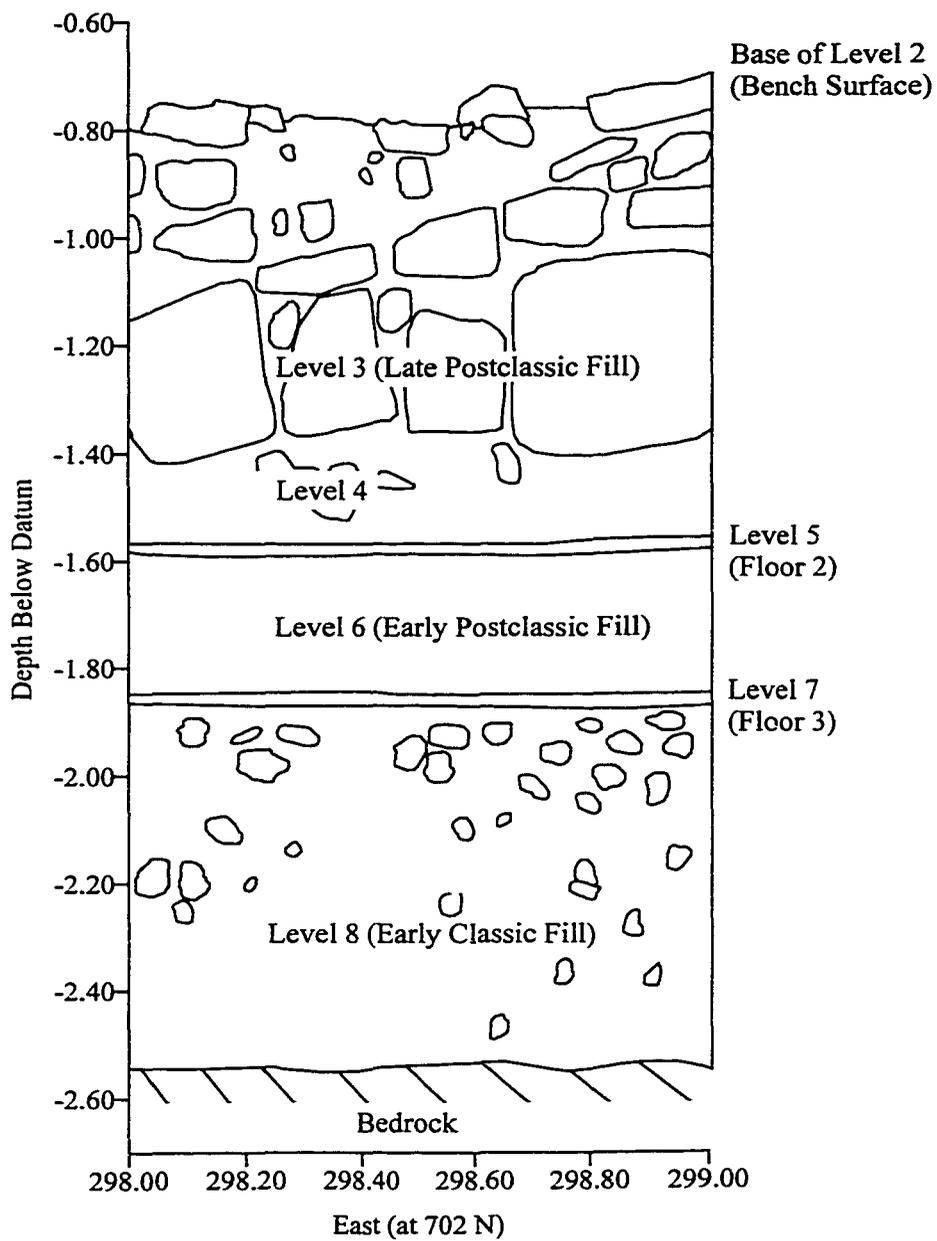


Figure 9-13. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Test Unit 702, 299, North Profile.

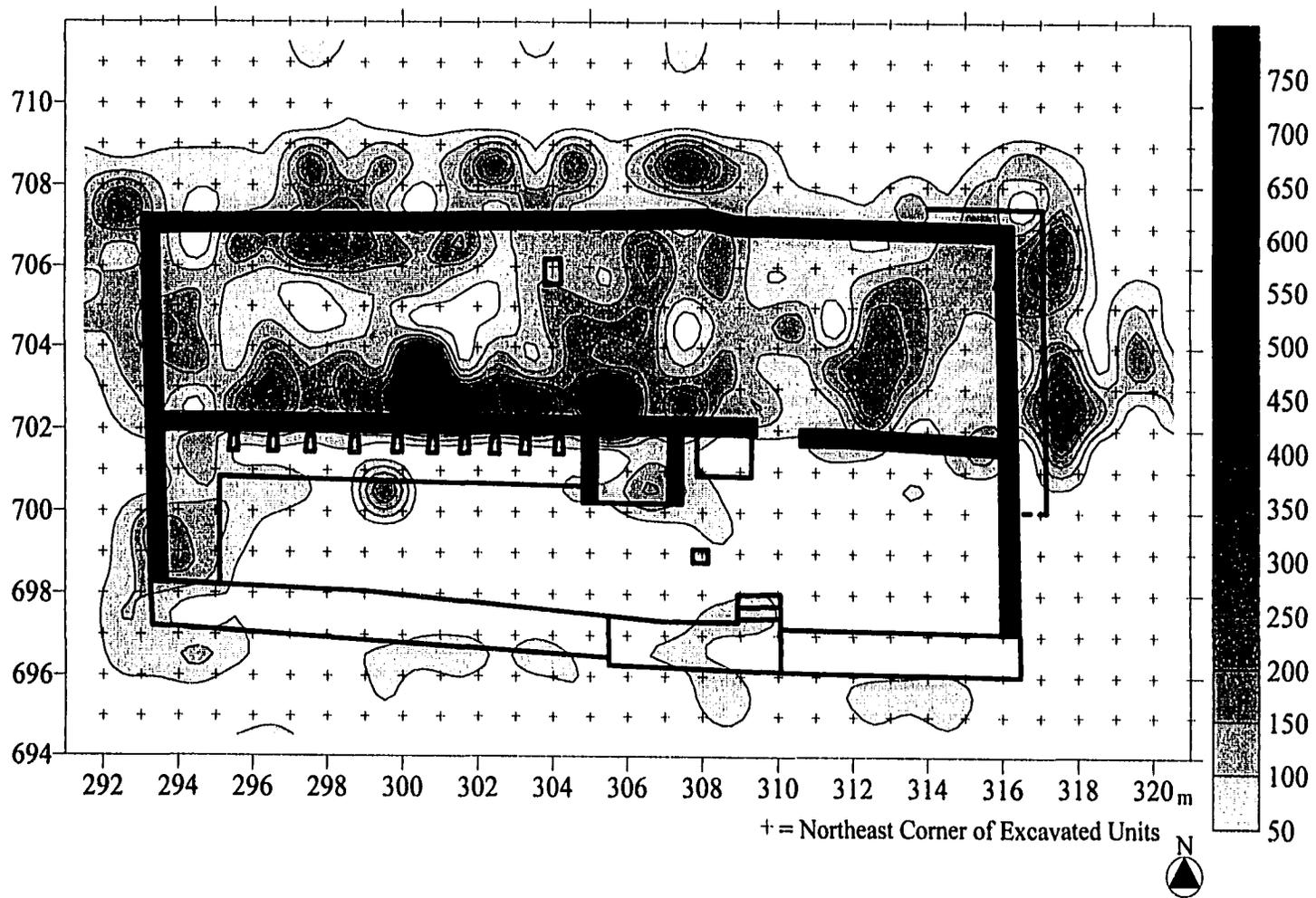


Figure 9-14. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Miscellaneous Ceramic Sherds.

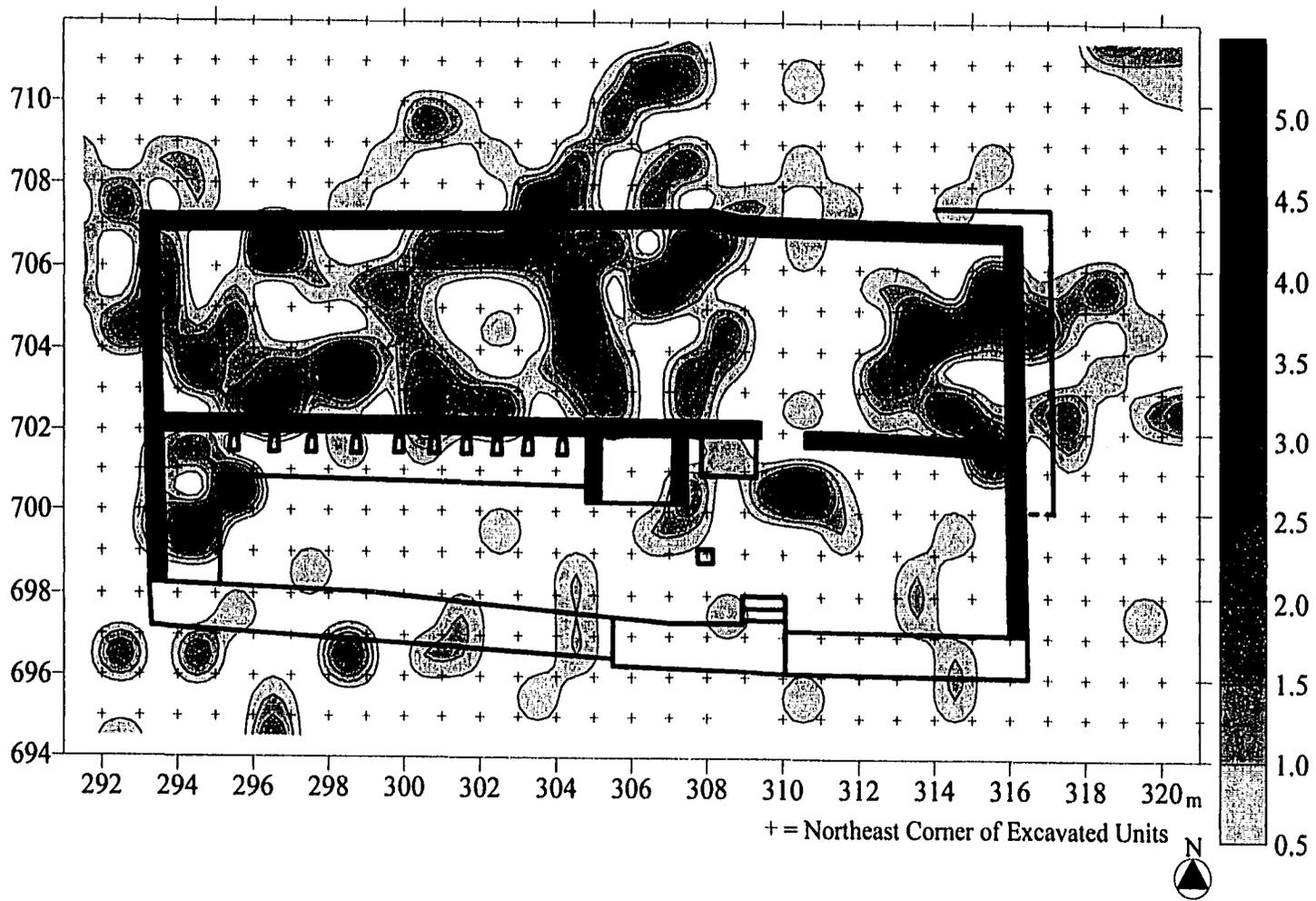
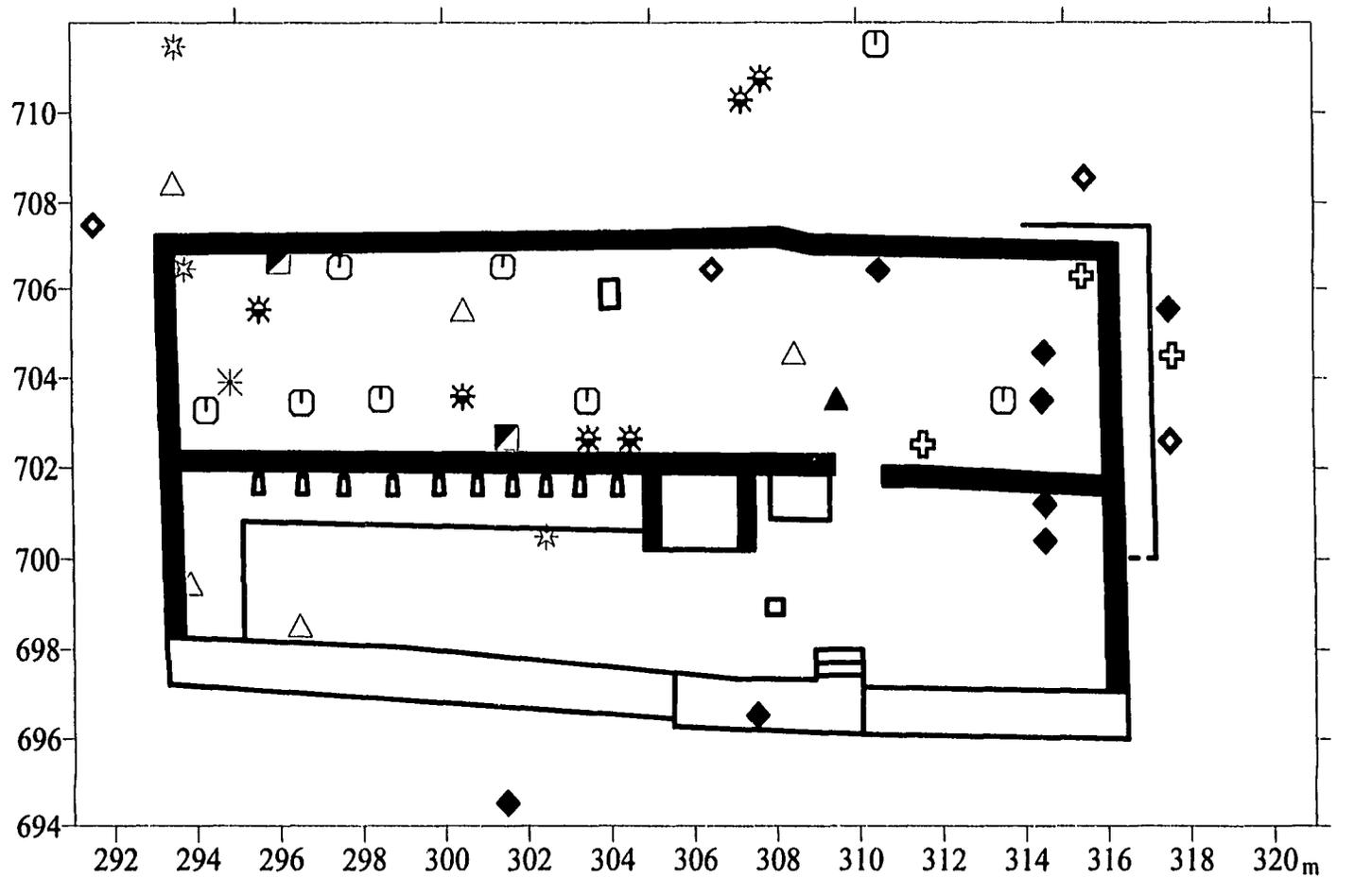


Figure 9-15. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Obsidian Blades.



MAP SYMBOLS:

- |                             |                             |                               |   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| ◆ Core, Obsidian            | △ Lance/ Knife Chert        | ✱ Scraper, Chert              |  |
| ✱ Gizzard Stone (?)         | ▲ Lance/ Knife Obsidian     | ✱ Uniface, Chert              |   |
| ◇ Greenstone, Miscellaneous | □ Mano, Smooth River Gravel | ⊕ Worked Stone, Miscellaneous |   |
| □ Hammerstone, Chert        | ▣ Metate, Fine Limestone    |                               |   |

Figure 9-16. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Uncommon Lithic Artifacts.

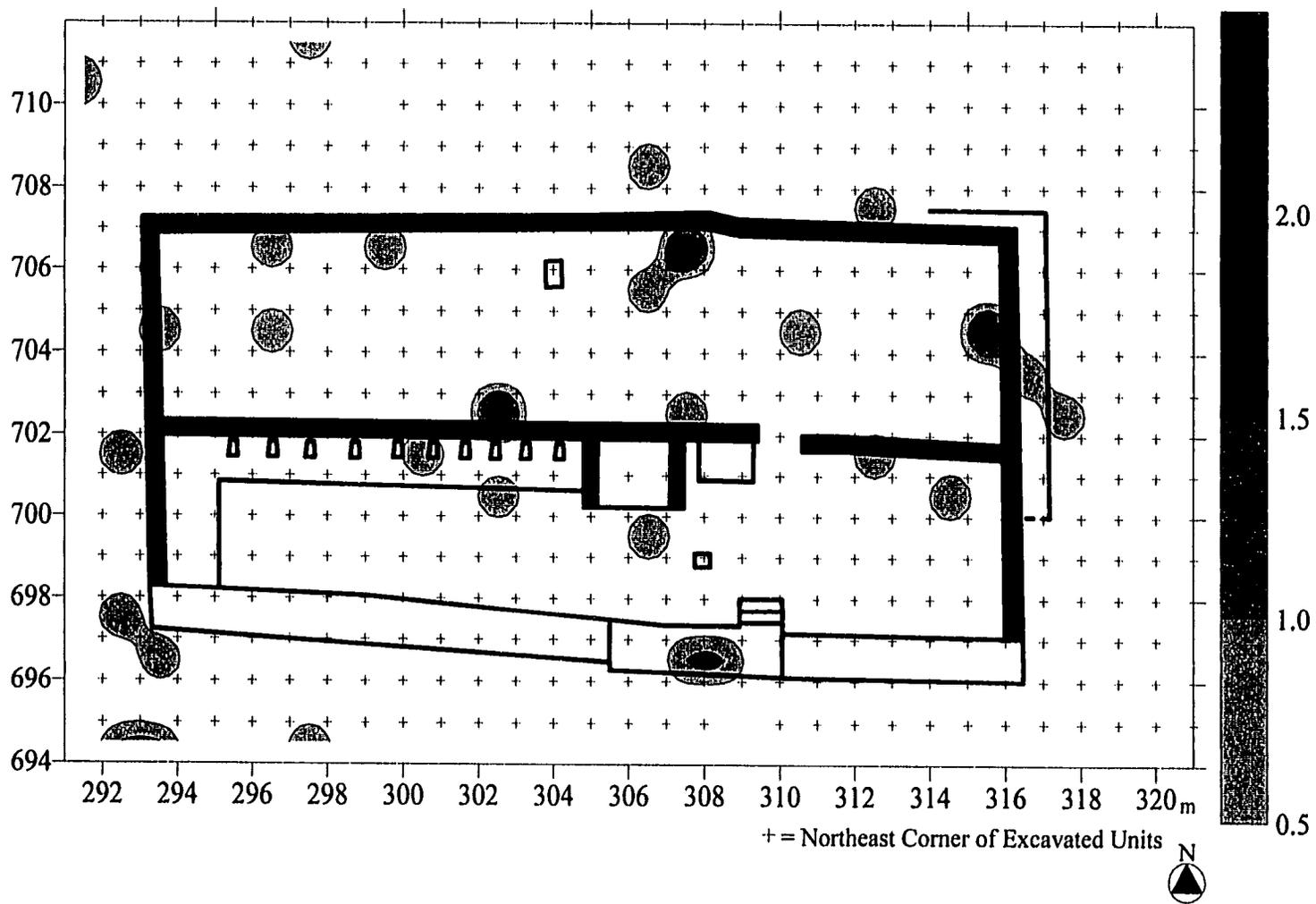


Figure 9-17. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Obsidian Corner-Notched Points.

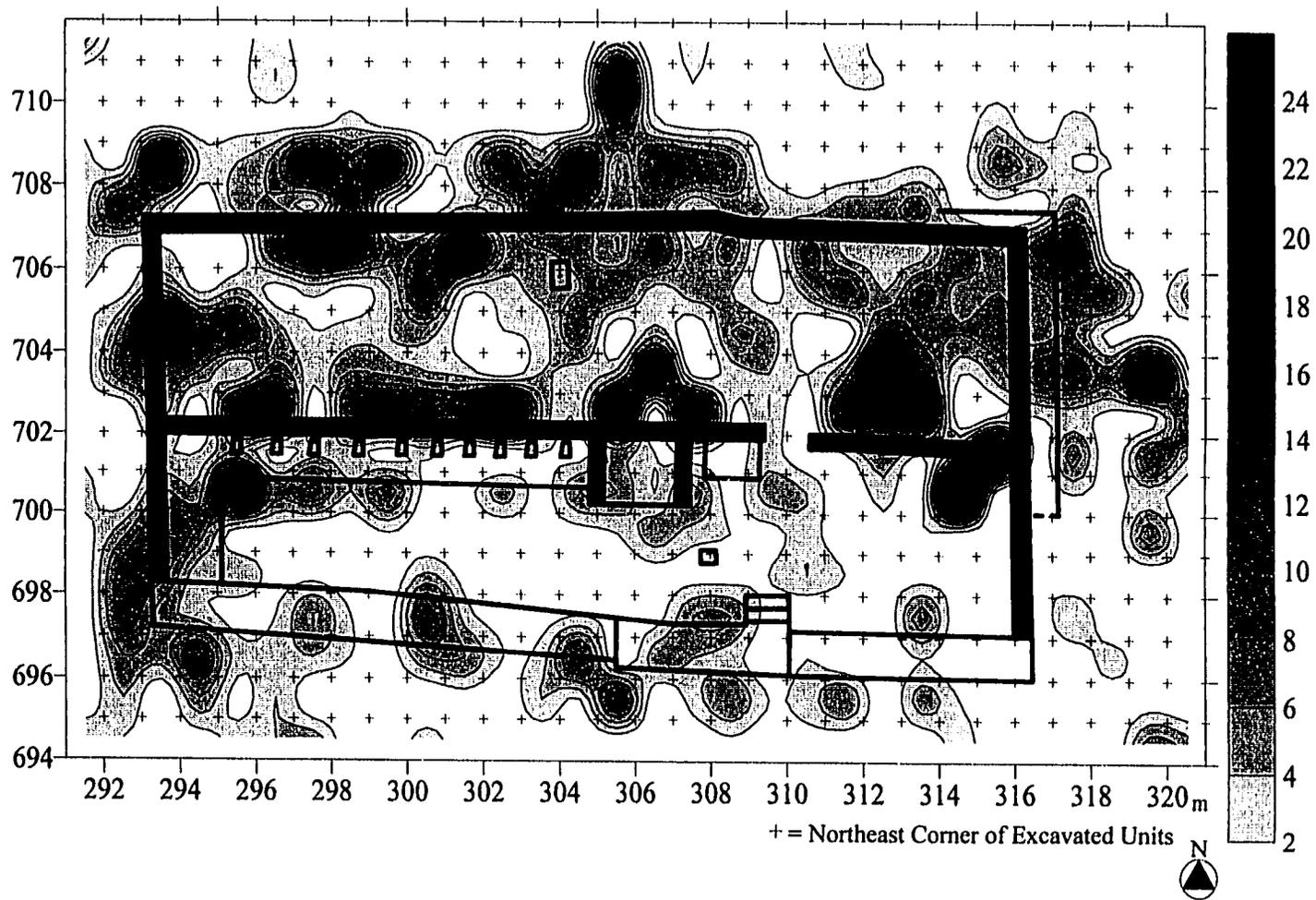


Figure 9-18. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Chert Debitage and Flakes.

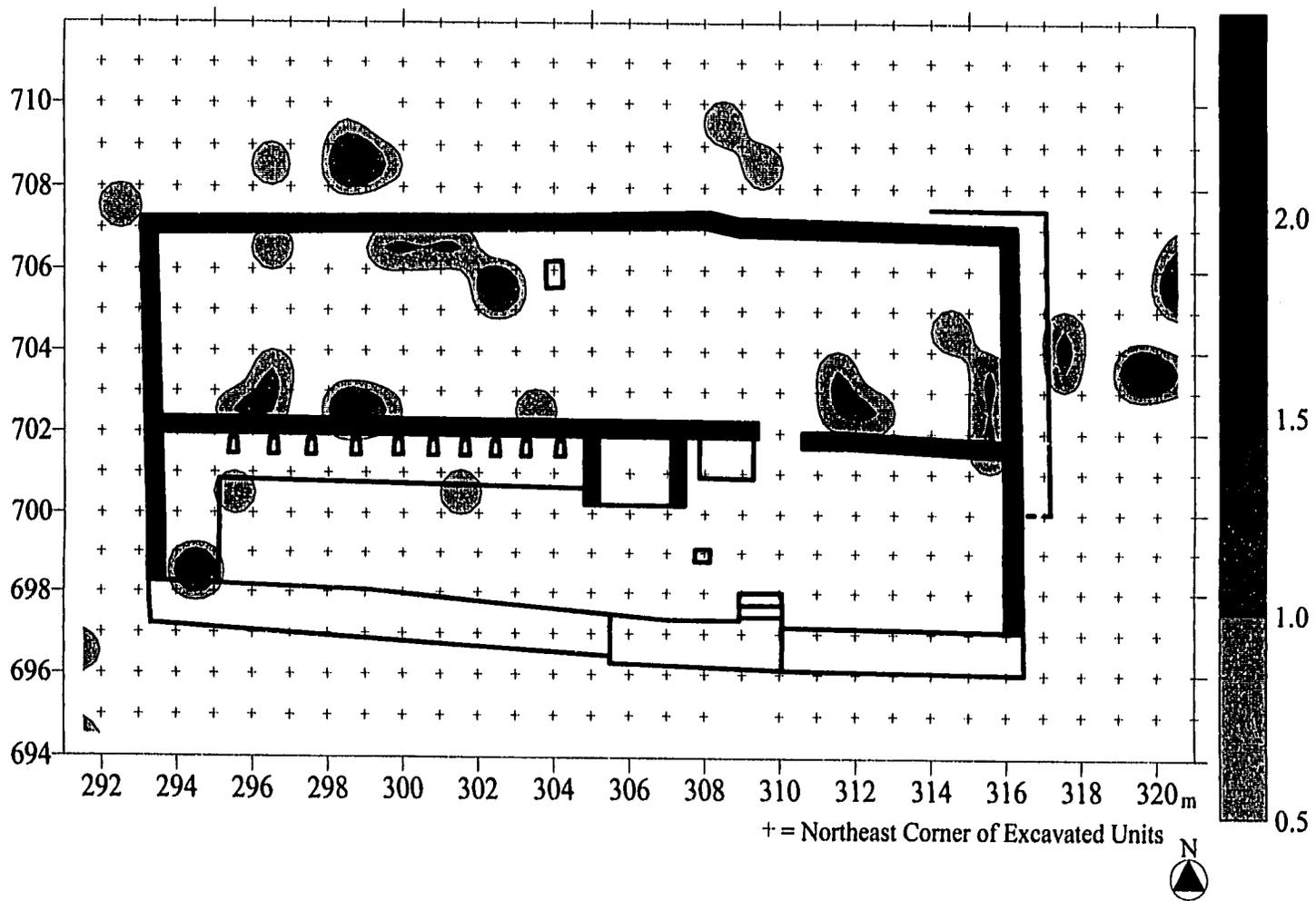


Figure 9-19. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Chert Corner-Notched Points.

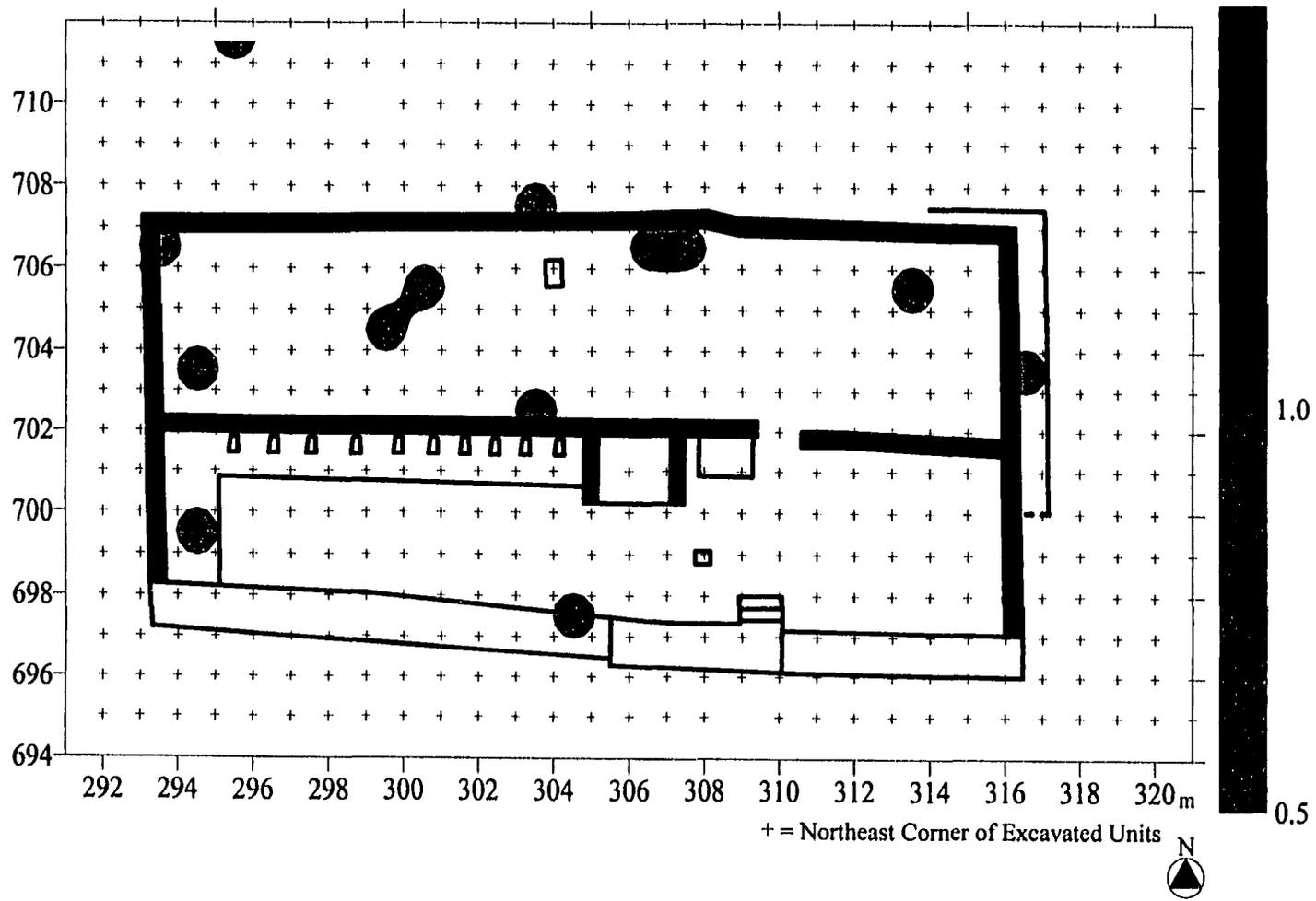


Figure 9-20. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Chert Cores.

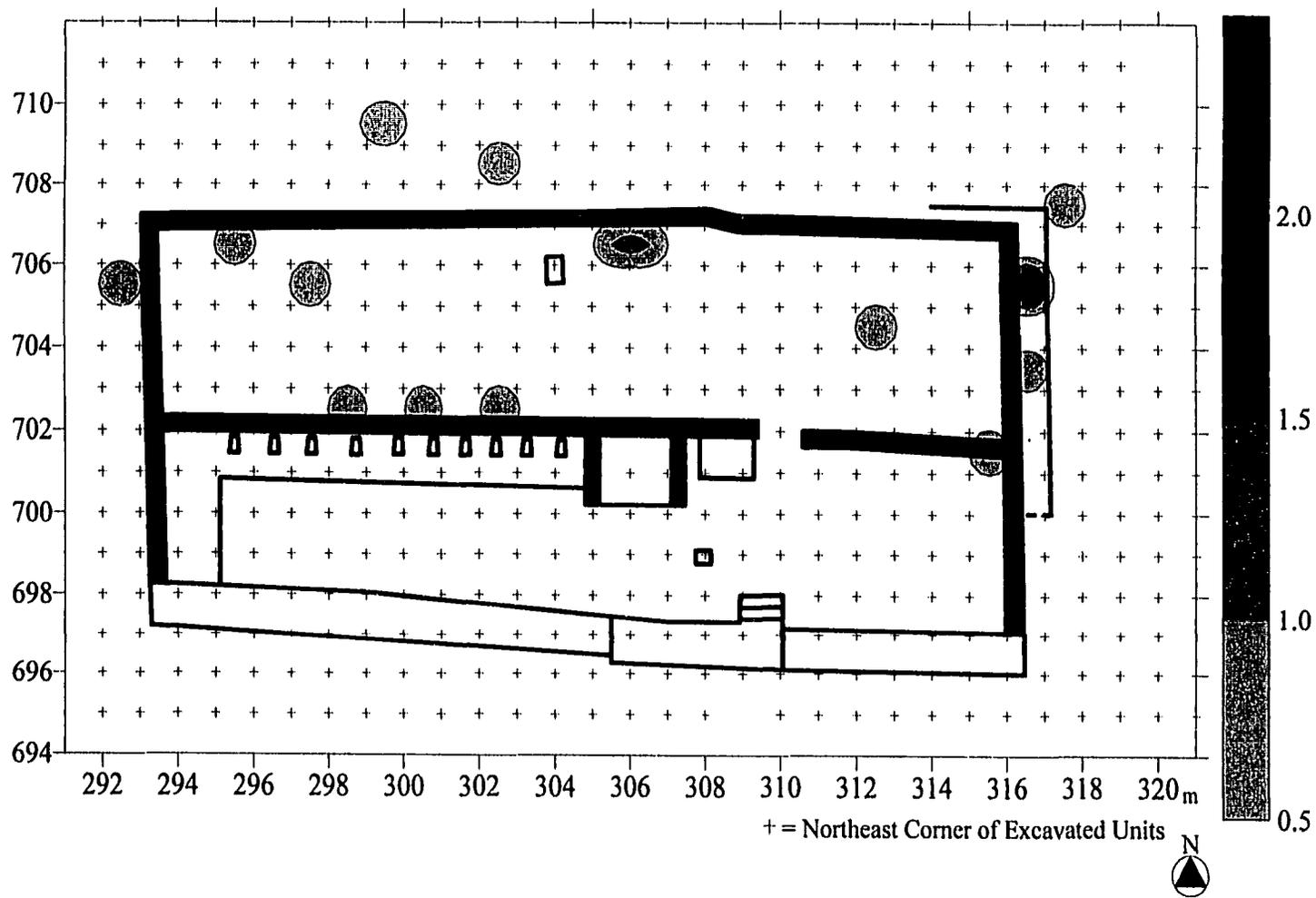


Figure 9-21. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Chert Bifaces.

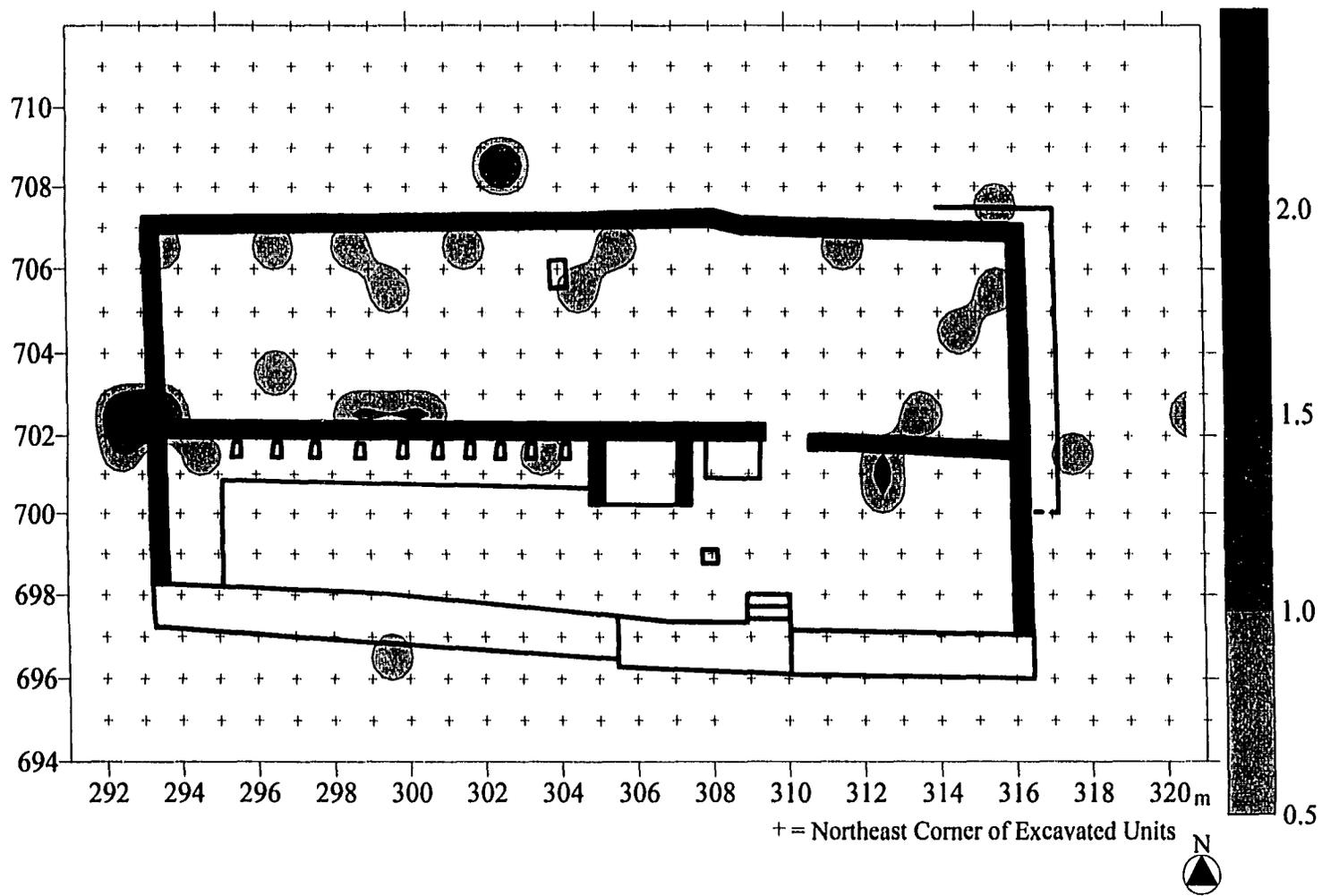


Figure 9-22. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Mano/Mano Fragments.

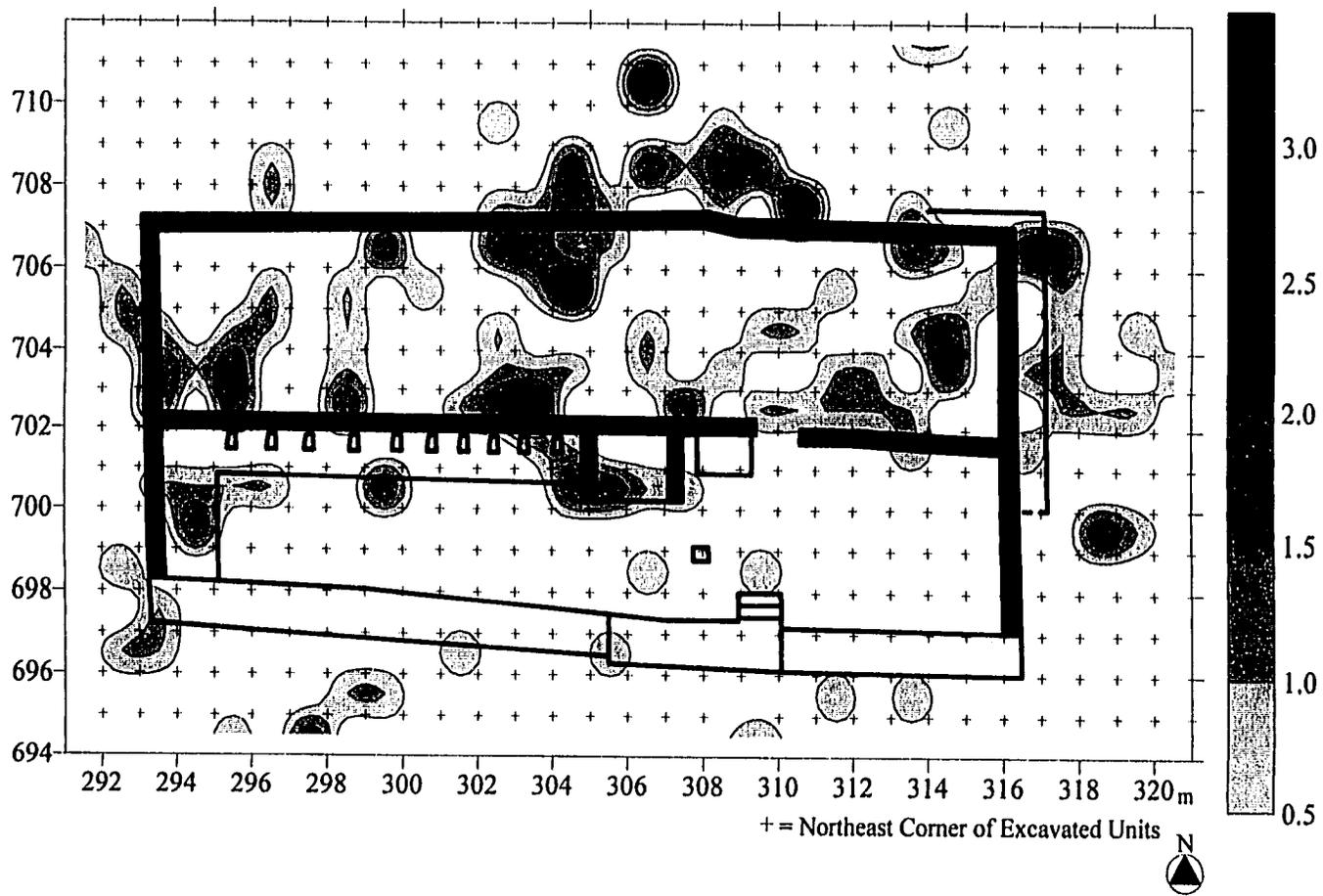
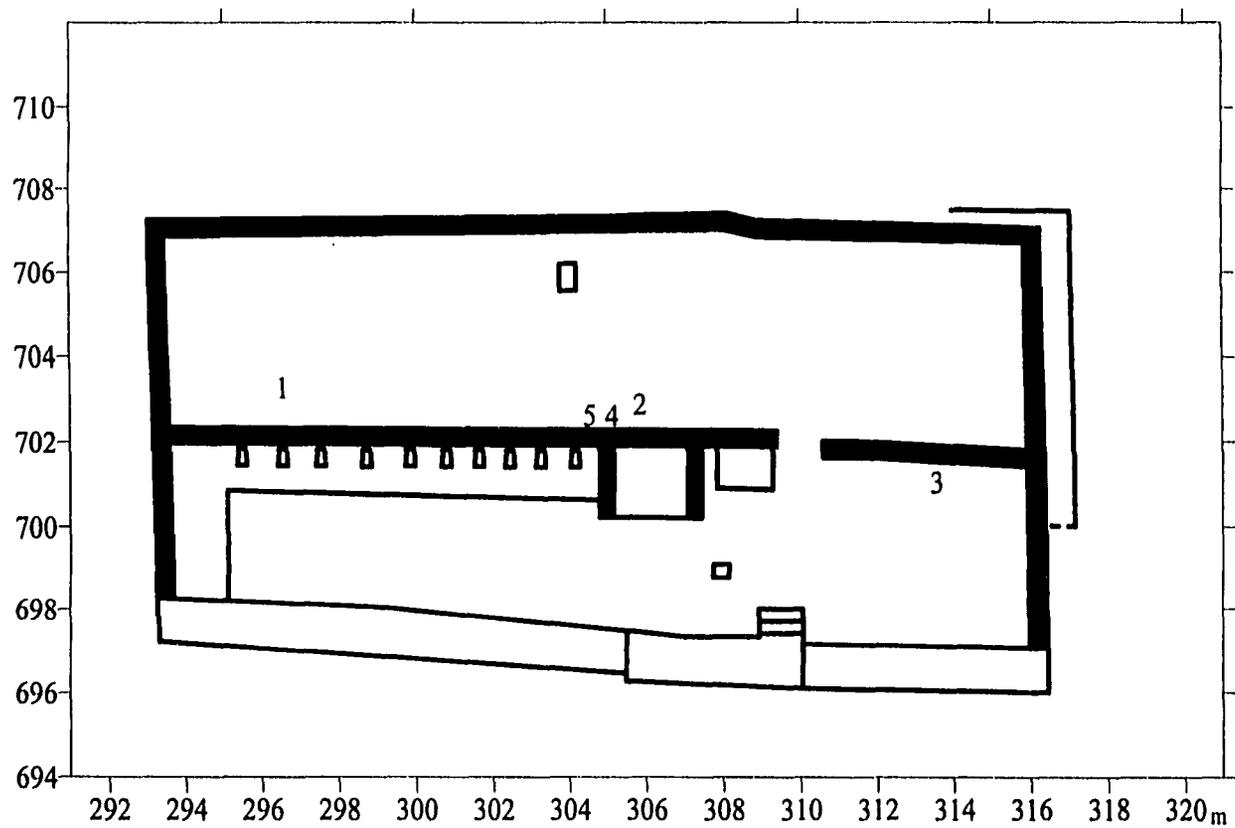


Figure 9-23. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Net Weights.



**MAP SYMBOLS:**

- 1 Macanche Red on Paste Tripod Dish (80%)
- 2 Ixpop Polychrome Vessel (40%)
- 3 Saca Polychrome Vessel (40%)
- 4 Utilitarian Jar
- 5 Utilitarian Jar



Figure 9-24. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Non-Censer Ceramic Vessels Defined In Situ.

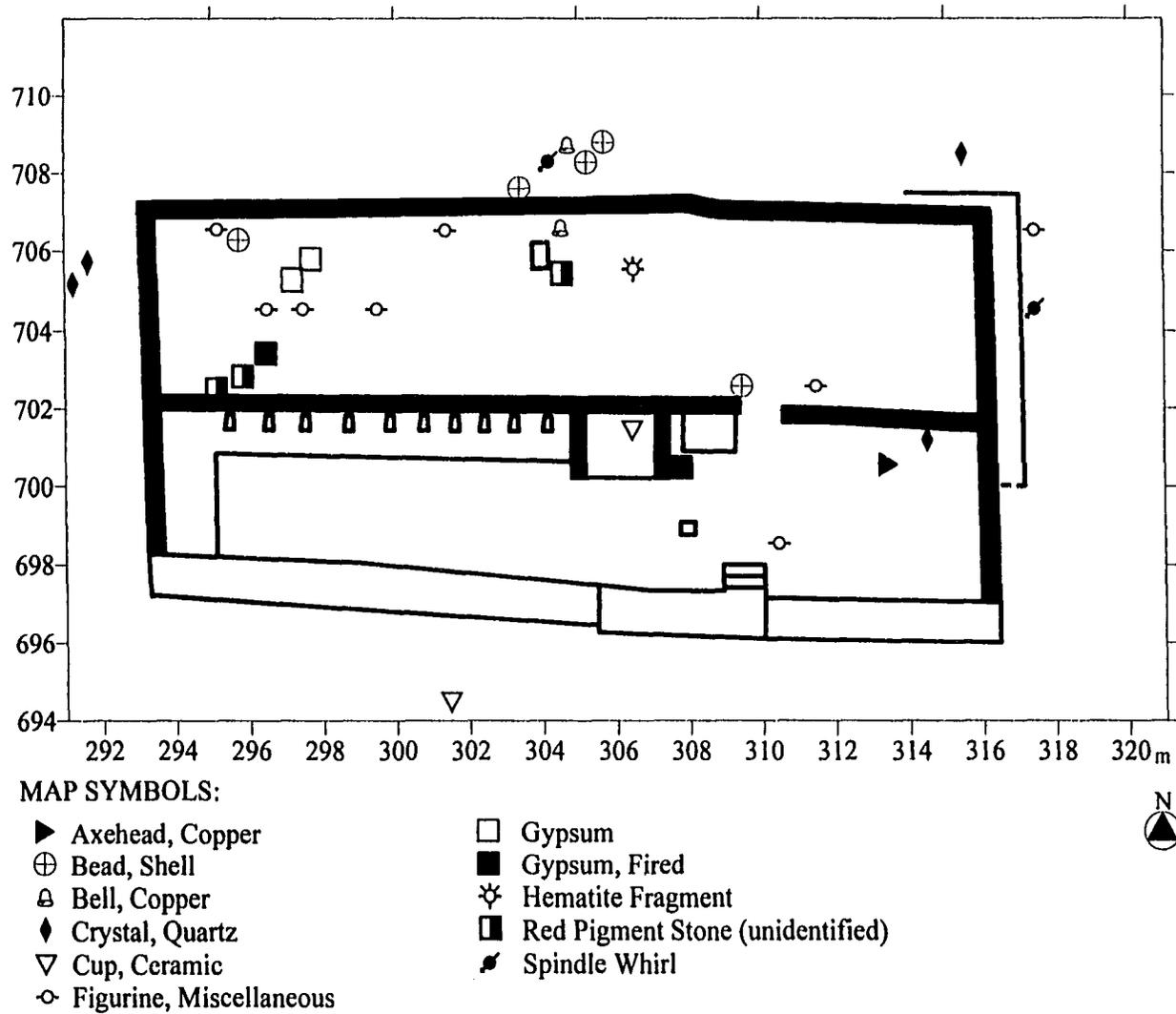


Figure 9-25. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Miscellaneous Uncommon Artifacts.

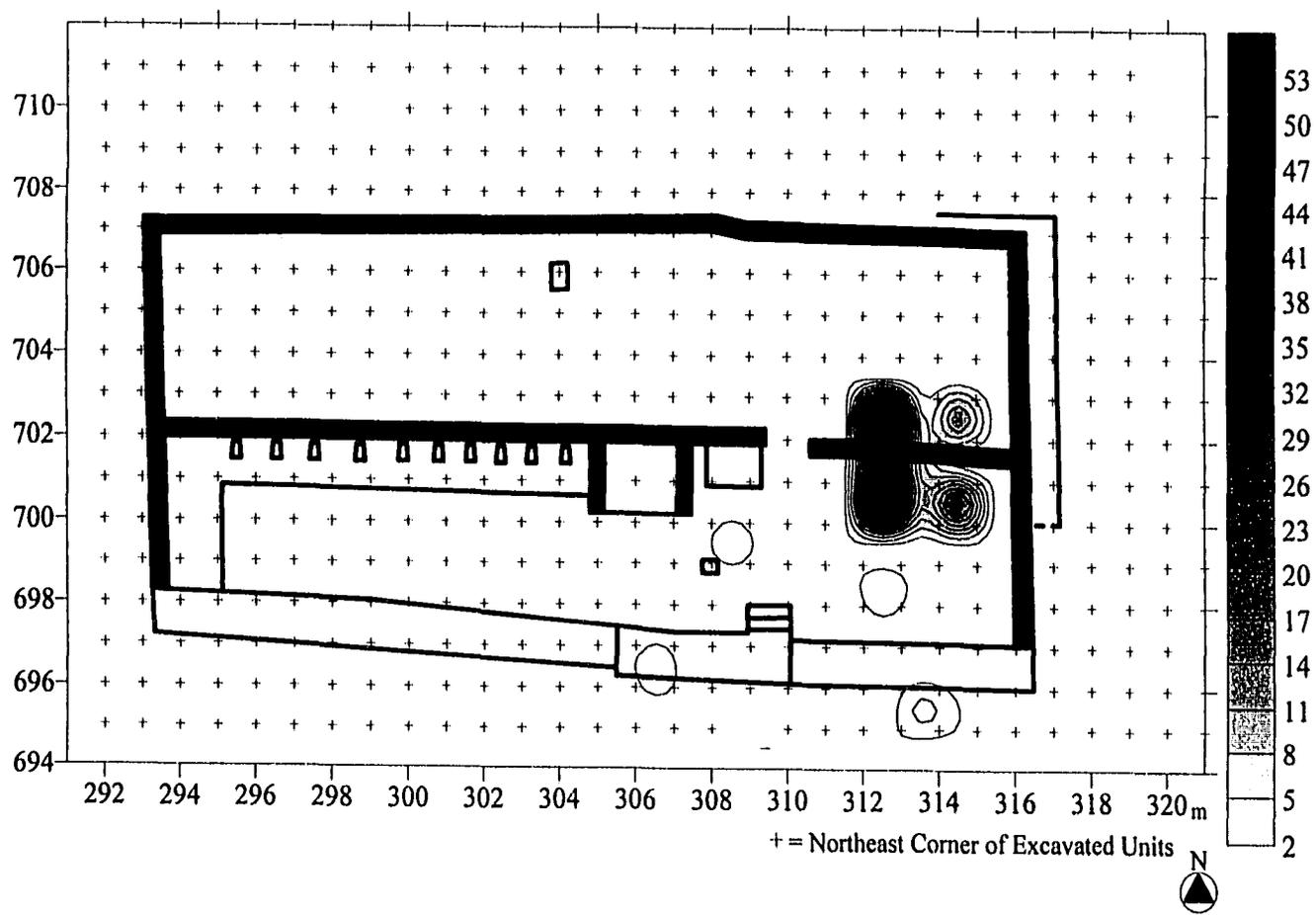
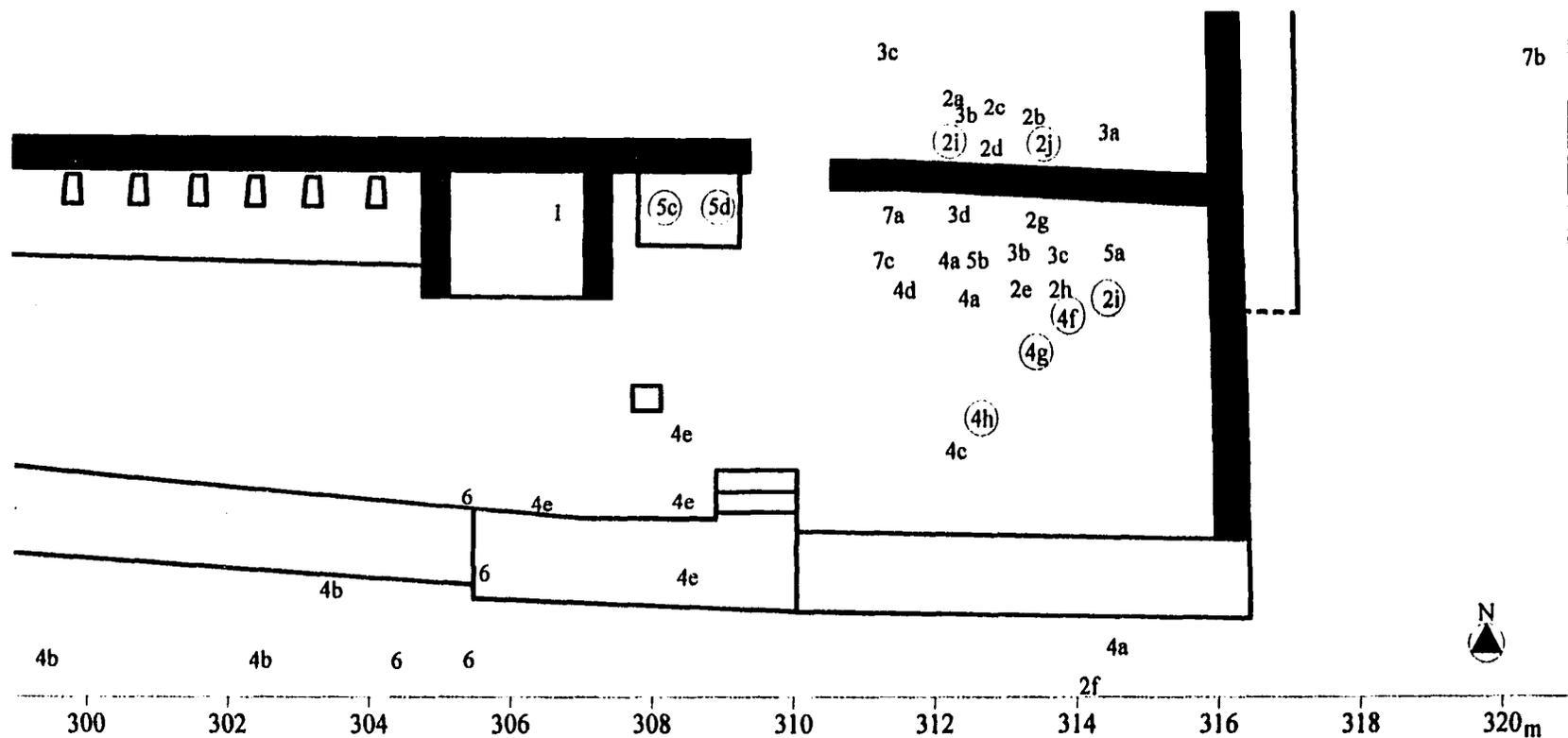


Figure 9-26. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Non-Effigy Censer Sherds.



**Vessel Numbers**

- 1- K'ulut Modeled Image Censer
- 2a- Mumul Composite Spiked Censer
- 2b- Mumul Composite Censer
- 2c- Mumul Composite Spiked Censer
- 2d- Mumul Composite Spiked Censer
- 2e- Mumul Composite Spiked Censer
- 2f- Mumul Composite Censer
- 2g- Mumul Composite Spiked Censer
- 2h- Mumul Composite Censer
- 3a- La Justa Composite Spiked Censer
- 3b- La Justa Composite Spiked Censer
- 3c- La Justa Composite Spiked Censer

- 3d- La Justa Composite Censer
- 4a- Gotas Composite Spiked Censer
- 4b- Gotas Composite Censer
- 4c- Gotas Composite Spiked Censer
- 4d- Gotas Composite Spiked Censer
- 4e- Gotas Composite Spiked Censer
- 4f- Gotas Composite Spiked Censer
- 4g- Gotas Composite Spiked Censer
- 4h- Base of an Gotas Censer
- 5a- Extranjeras Composite Spiked Censer
- 5b- Extranjeras Composite Spiked Censer
- 6- Patojo var. Patojo Image Censer
- 7a- Chilo Tripod Censer
- 7b- Chilo Tripod Censer
- 7c- Chilo Tripod Censers

- (2i)- Base of a Mumul Composite Censer
- (2j)- Base of a Mumul Composite Censer
- (4f)- Base of a Gotas Composite Censer
- (4g)- Base of a Gotas Composite Censer
- (4h)- Base of an Gotas Censer
- (5c)- Base of an Extranjeras/ La Justa Censer
- (5d)- Base of an Extranjeras/ La Justa Censer

Figure 9-27. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Locations of Sherds of Specific Censers.

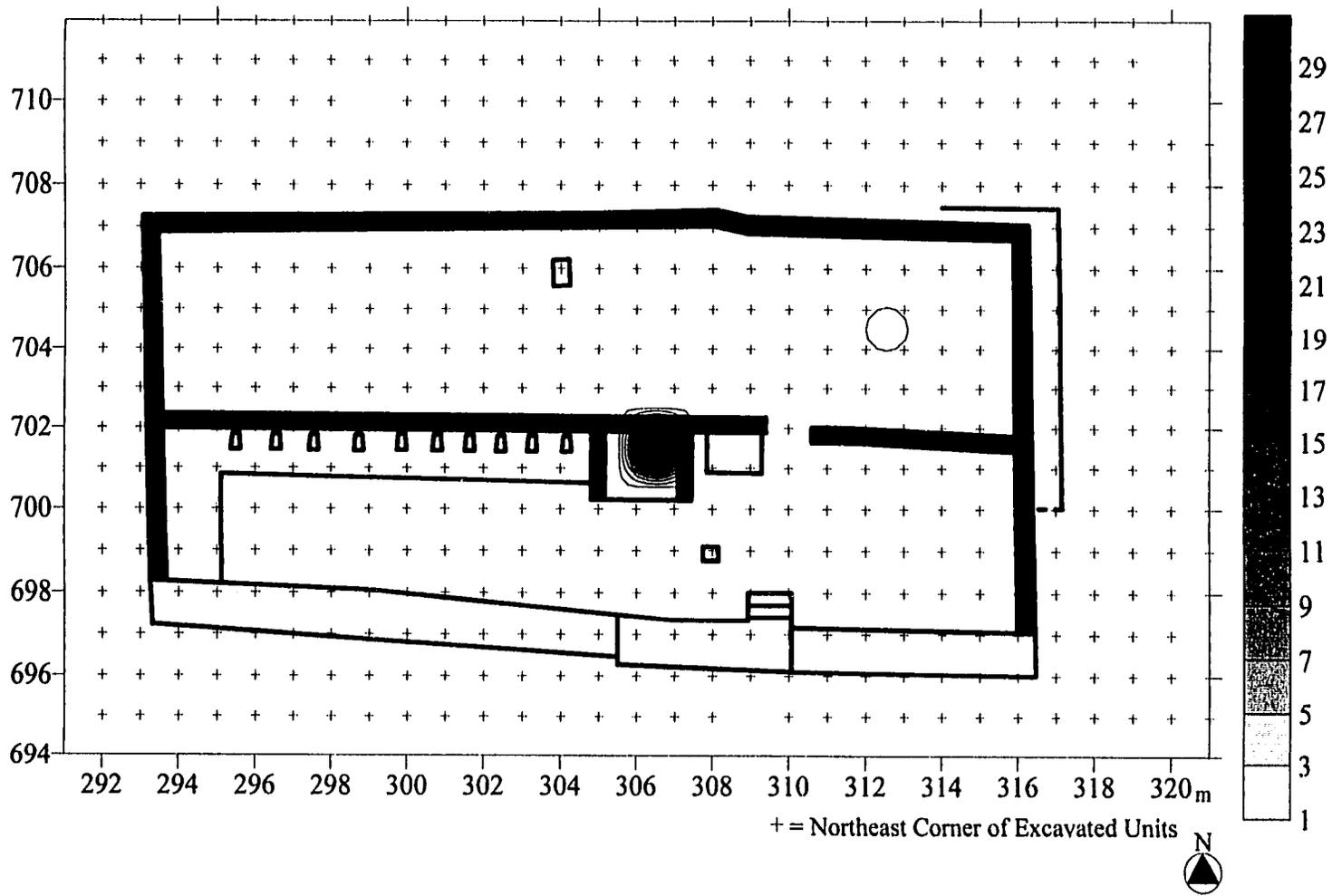


Figure 9-28. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Kulut Modeled Censer Sherds.

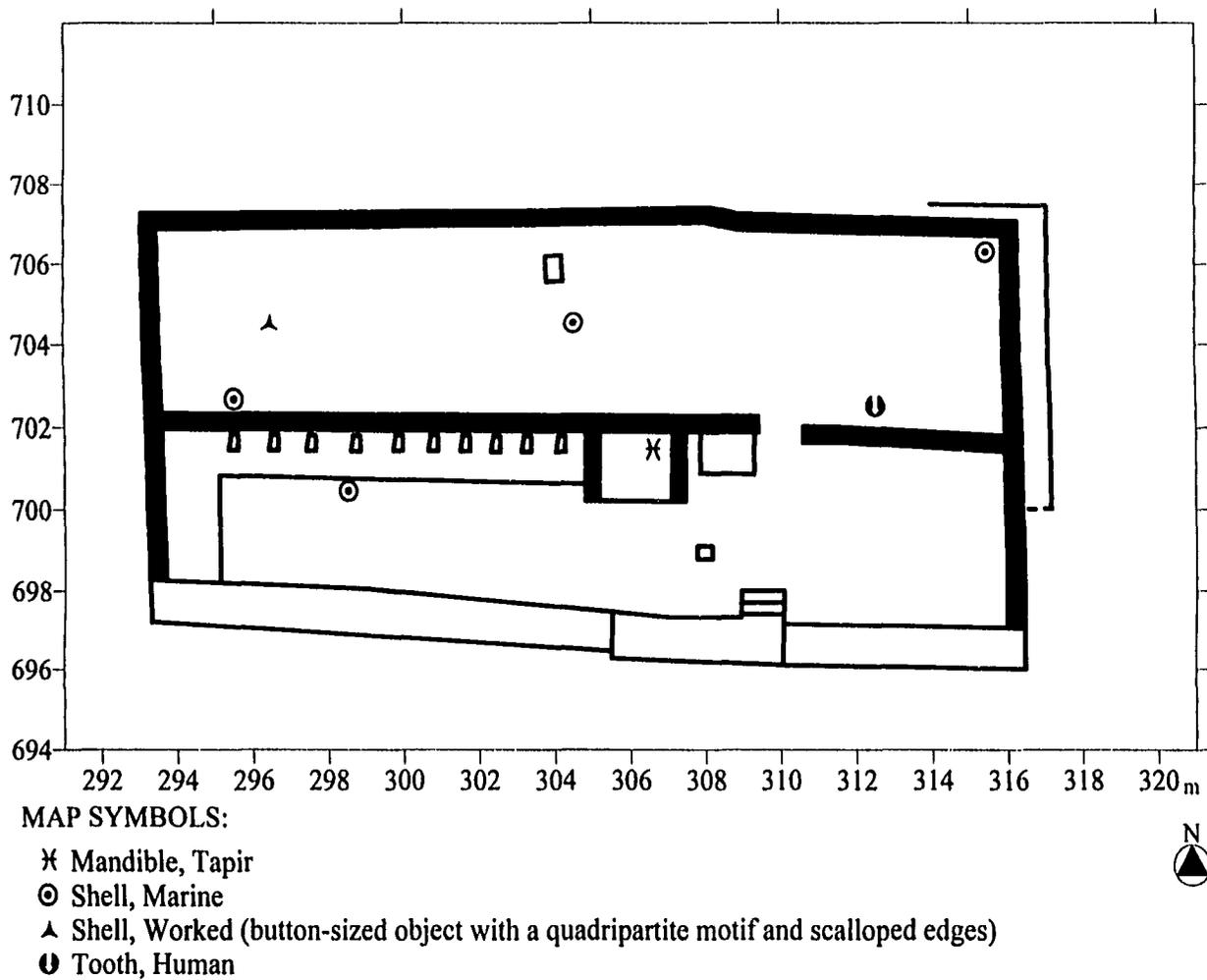


Figure 9-29. Zacpetén, Str. 719, Uncommon Bone and Shell Artifacts.

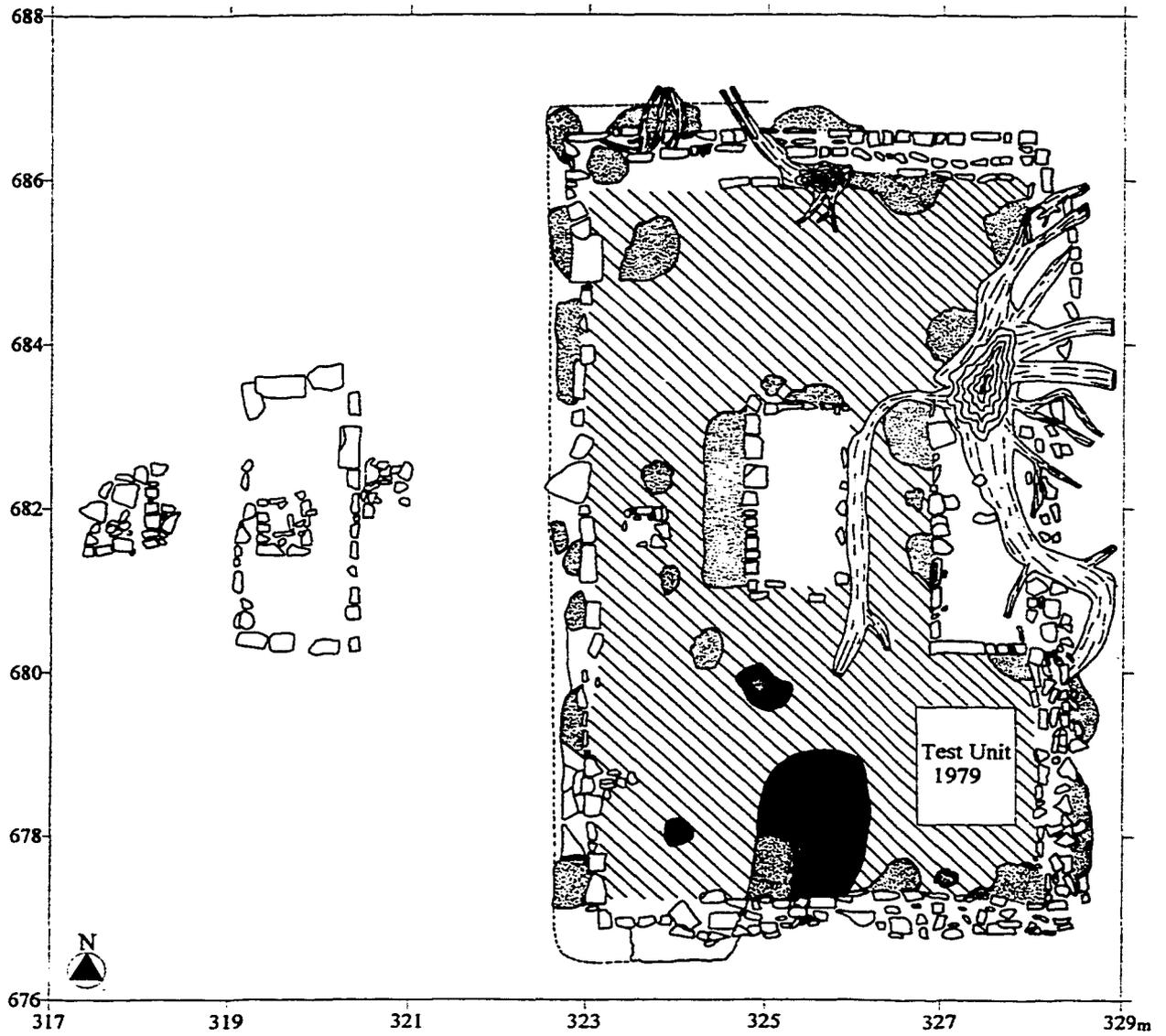


Figure 9-30. Zacpetén, Str. 720 and 721, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

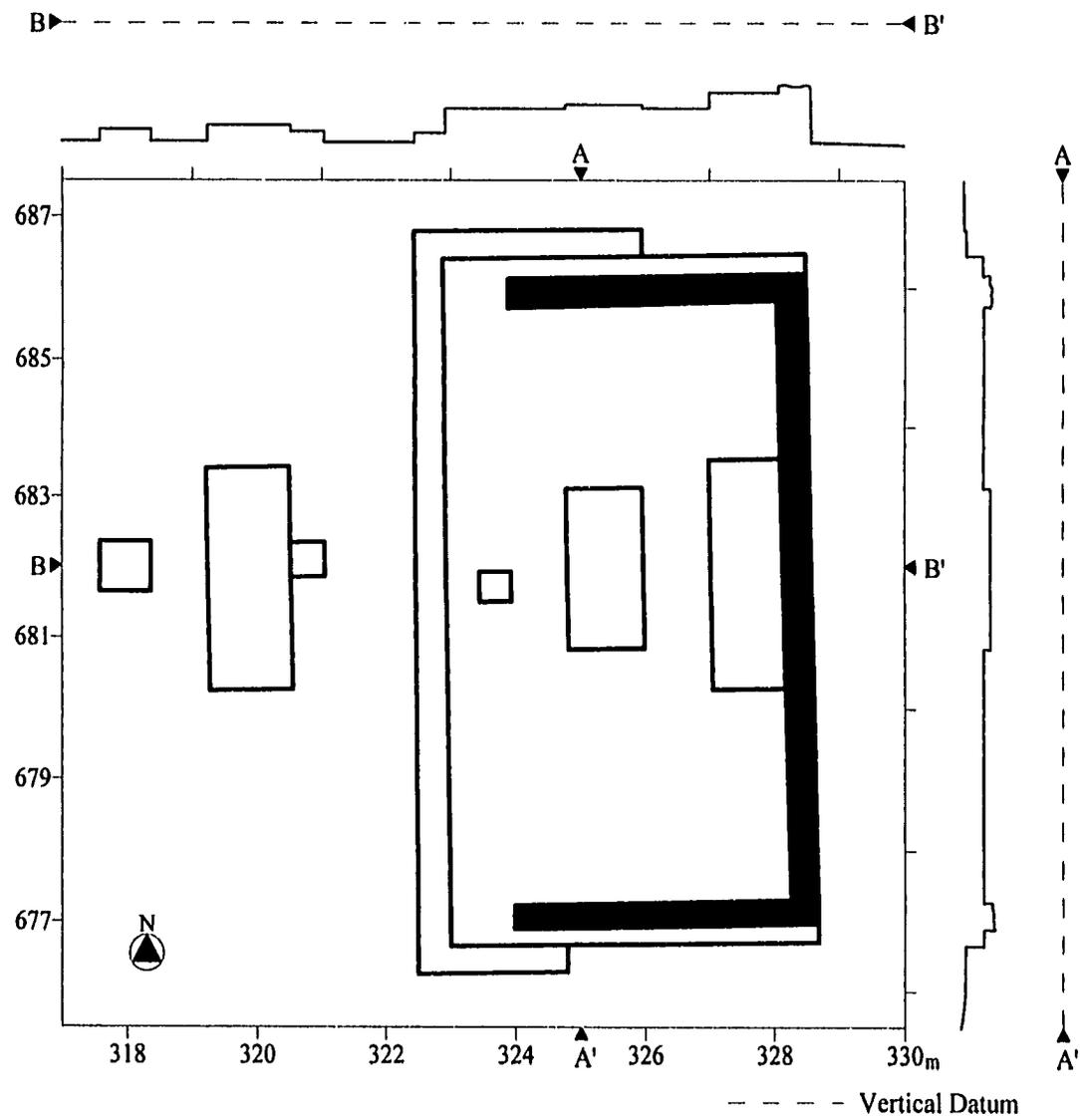


Figure 9-31. Zacpetén, Str. 720 and 721, Plan and Cross-Sections.

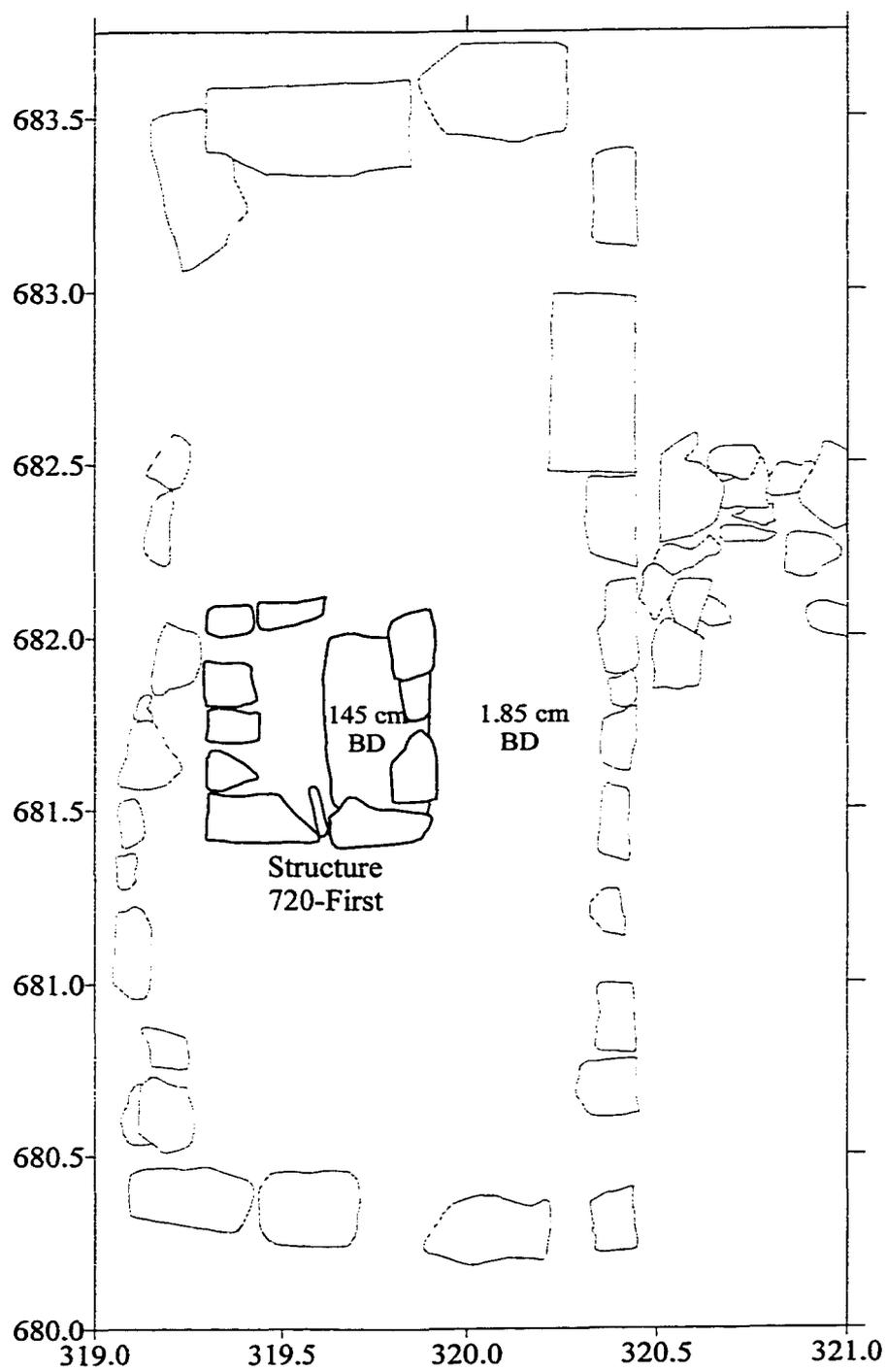


Figure 9-32. Zacpetén, Str. 720, First Construction.

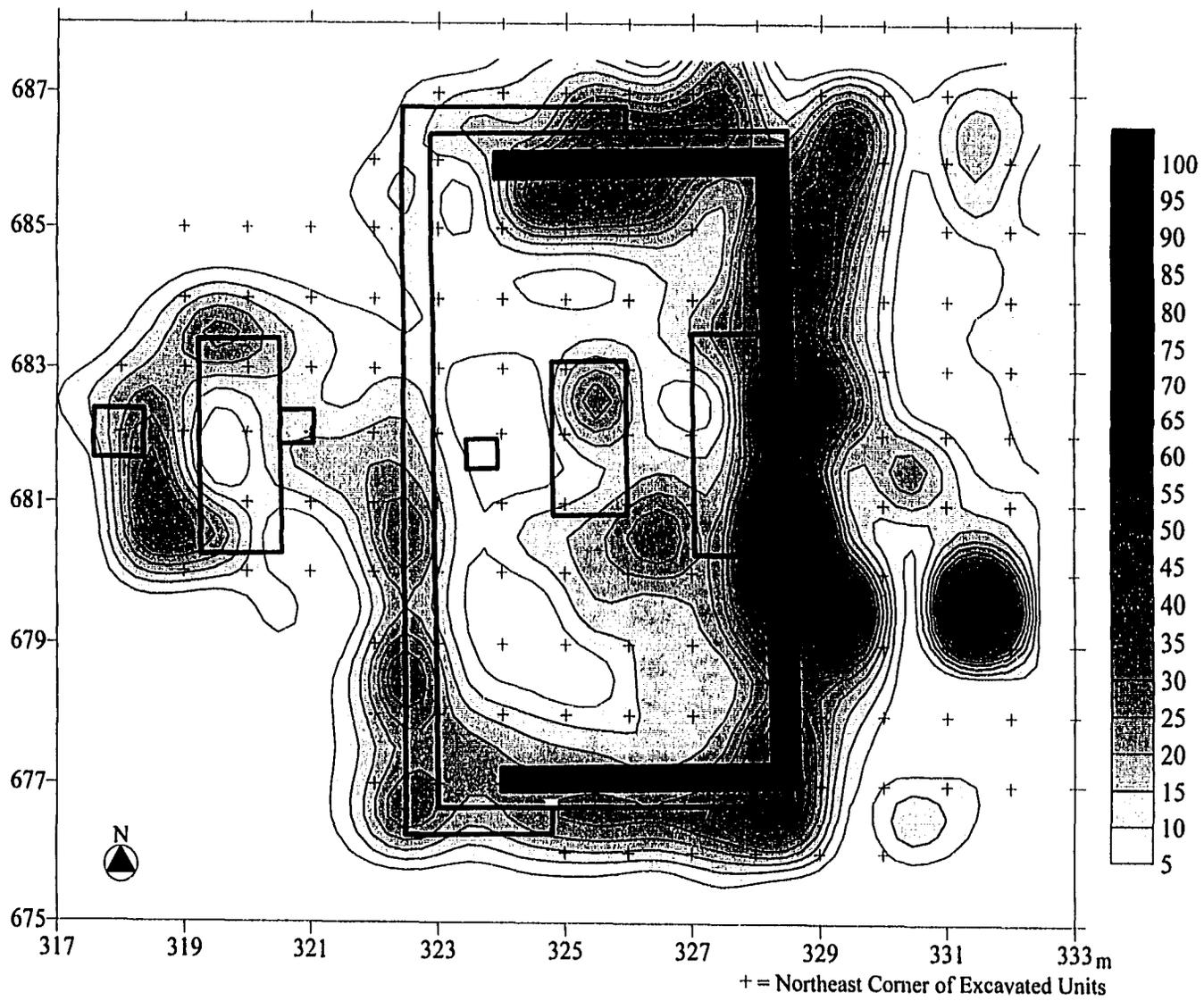


Figure 9-33. Zacpetén, Str. 720 and 721, Miscellaneous Ceramics Sherds.

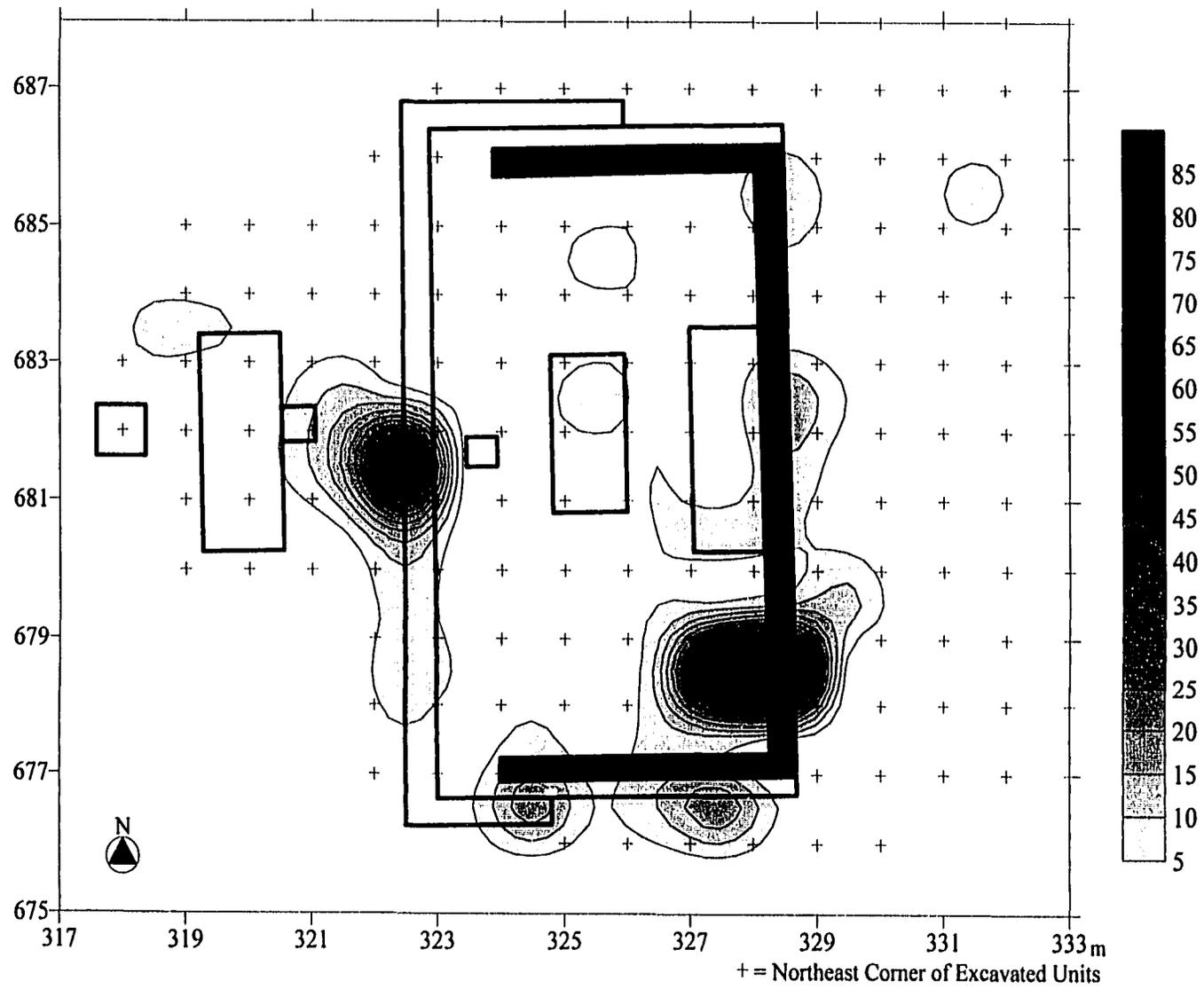
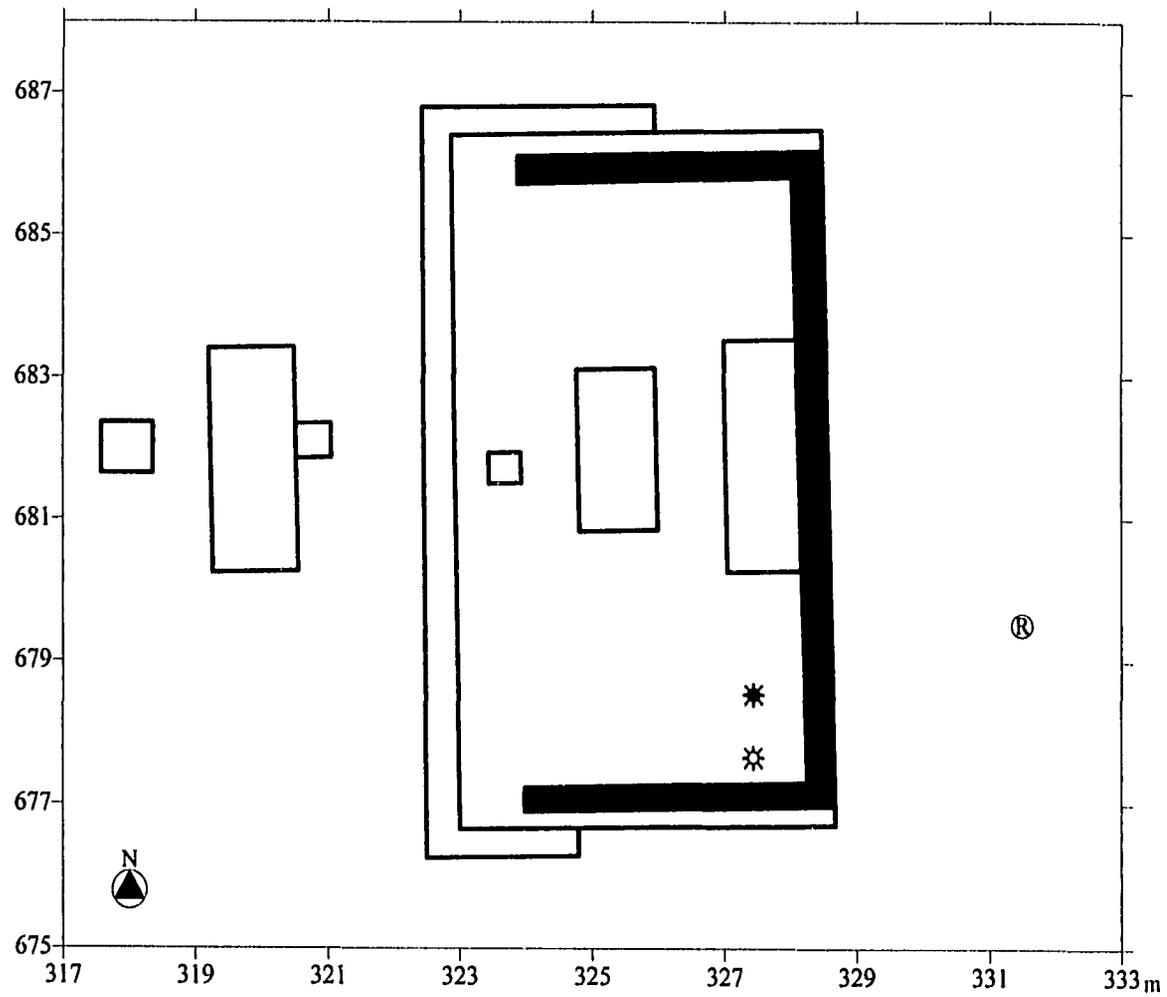


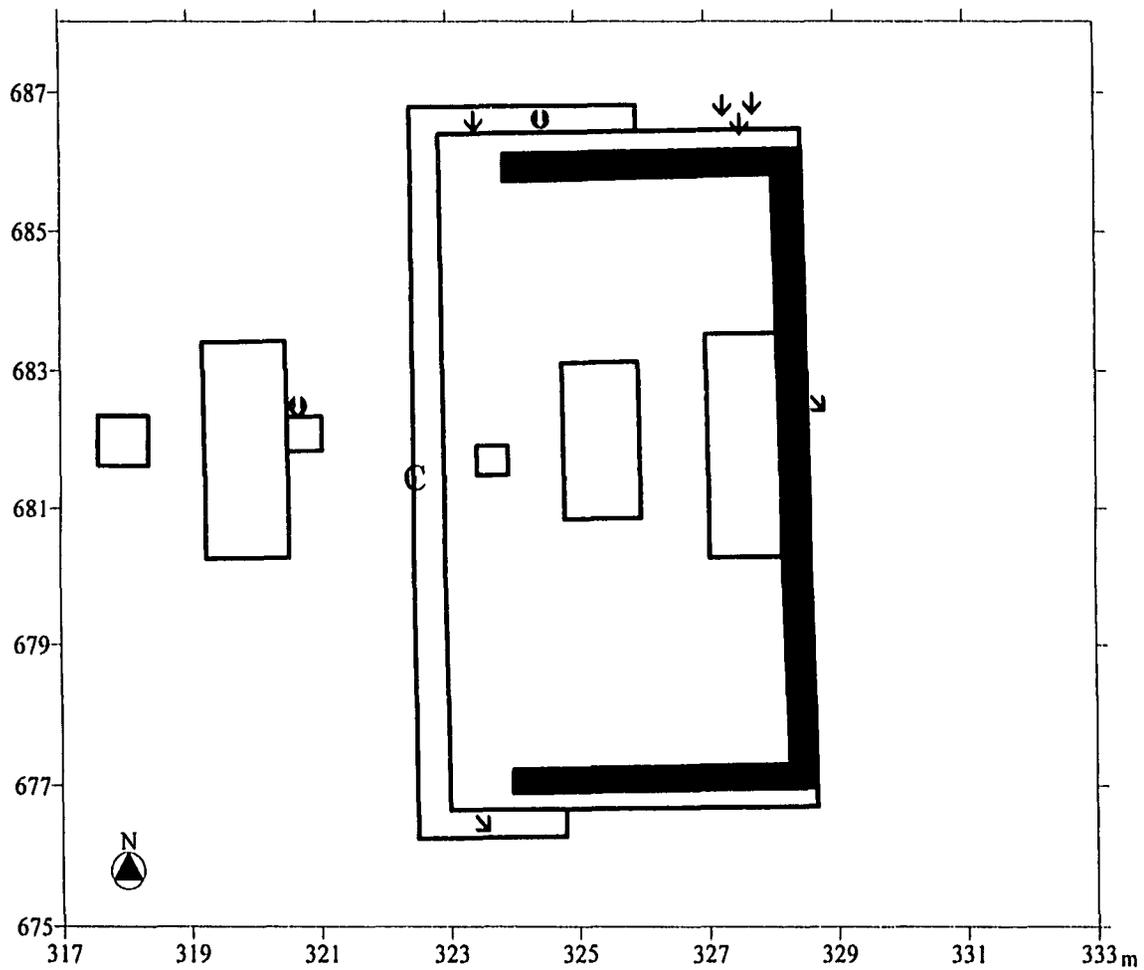
Figure 9-34. Zacpetén, Str. 720 and 721, Miscellaneous Bone.



**MAP SYMBOLS:**

- \* Offering Dish (vessel)
- \* Offering Dish (sherd)
- ® Bead, Red Stone

Figure 9-35. Zacpetén, Str. 720 and 721, Miscellaneous Uncommon Artifacts.



- MAP SYMBOLS:
- C Bird Cranium
  - u Tooth, Human
  - v Tooth, Animal Canine
  - ↓ Tooth, Animal, Unspecified

Figure 9-36. Zacpetén, Str. 720 and 721, Uncommon Bone and Shell Artifacts.

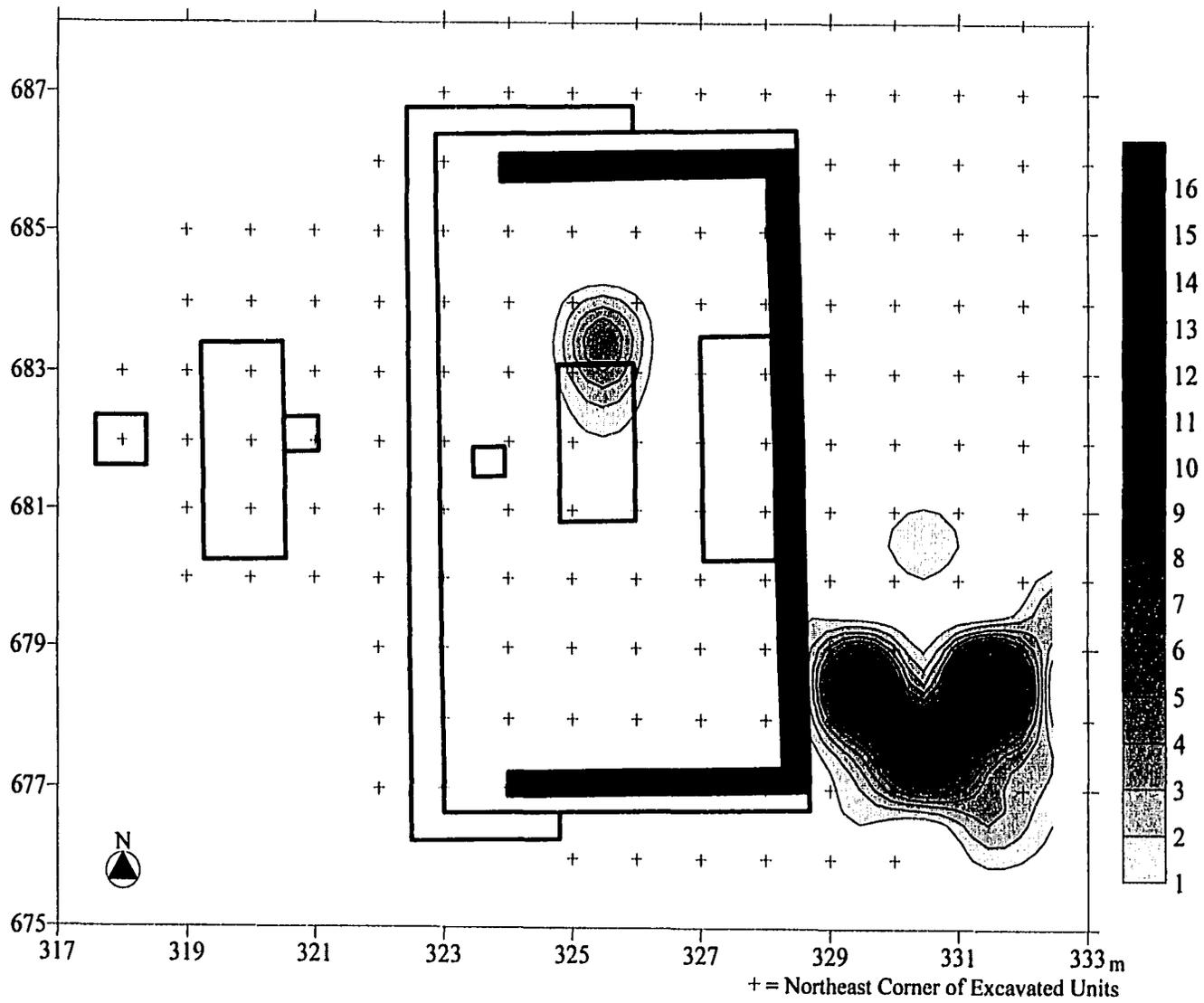


Figure 9-37. Zacpetén, Str. 720 and 721, Chipotle Red Sherds.

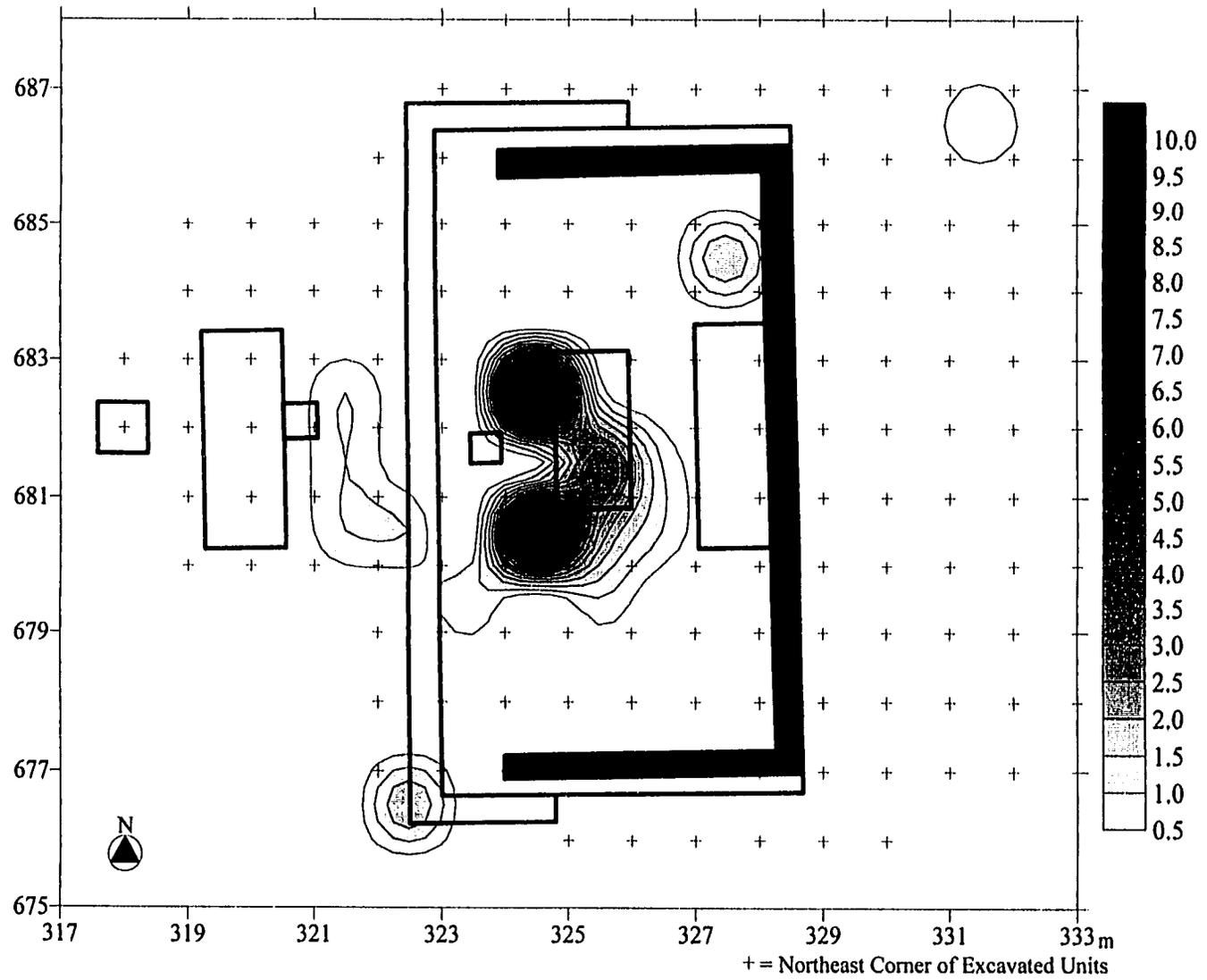


Figure 9-38. Zacpetén, Str. 720 and 721, Mumul Composite Center Sherds.

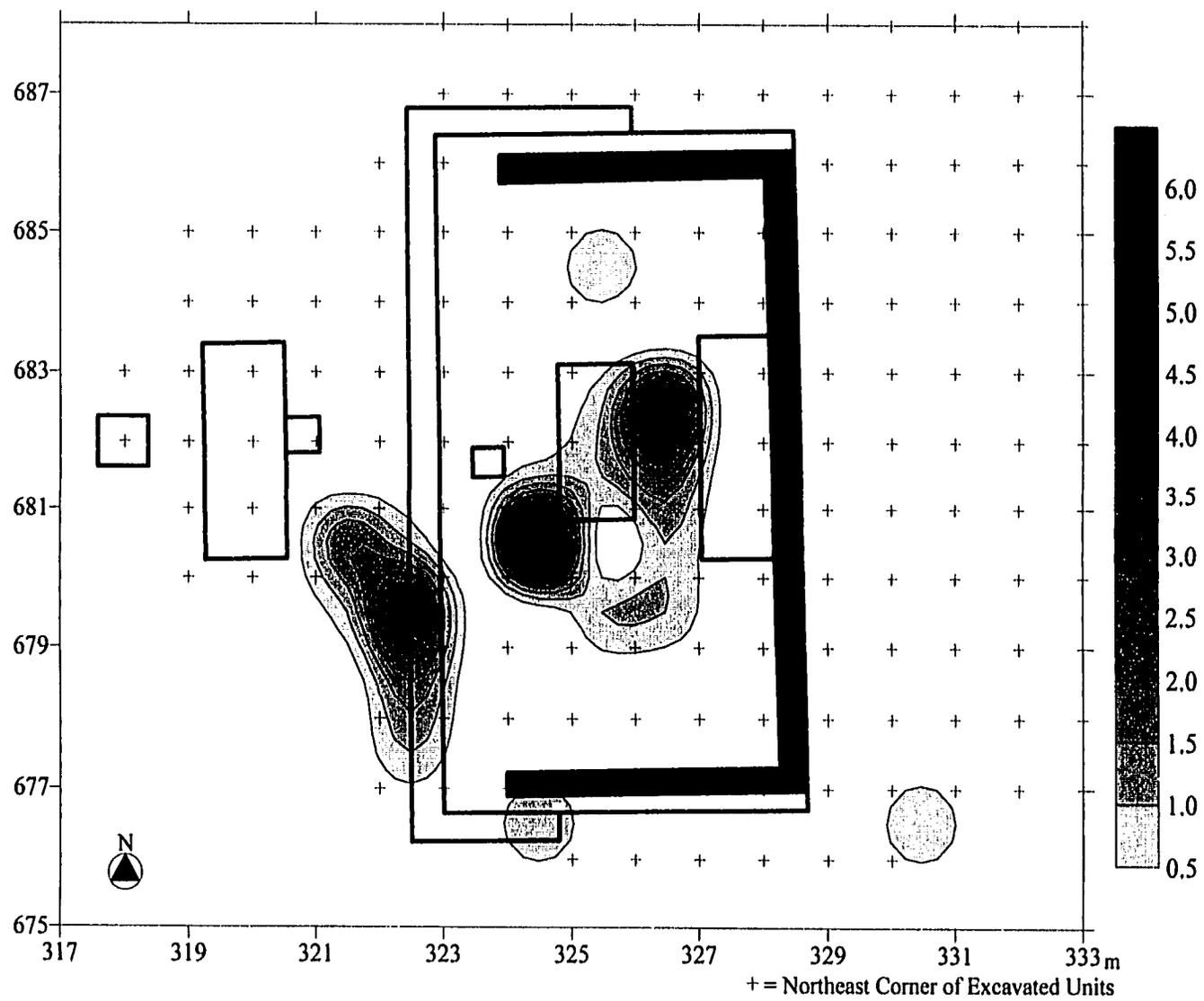


Figure 9-39. Zacpetén, Str. 720 and 721, La Justa/Extranjeras Composite Censer Sherds.

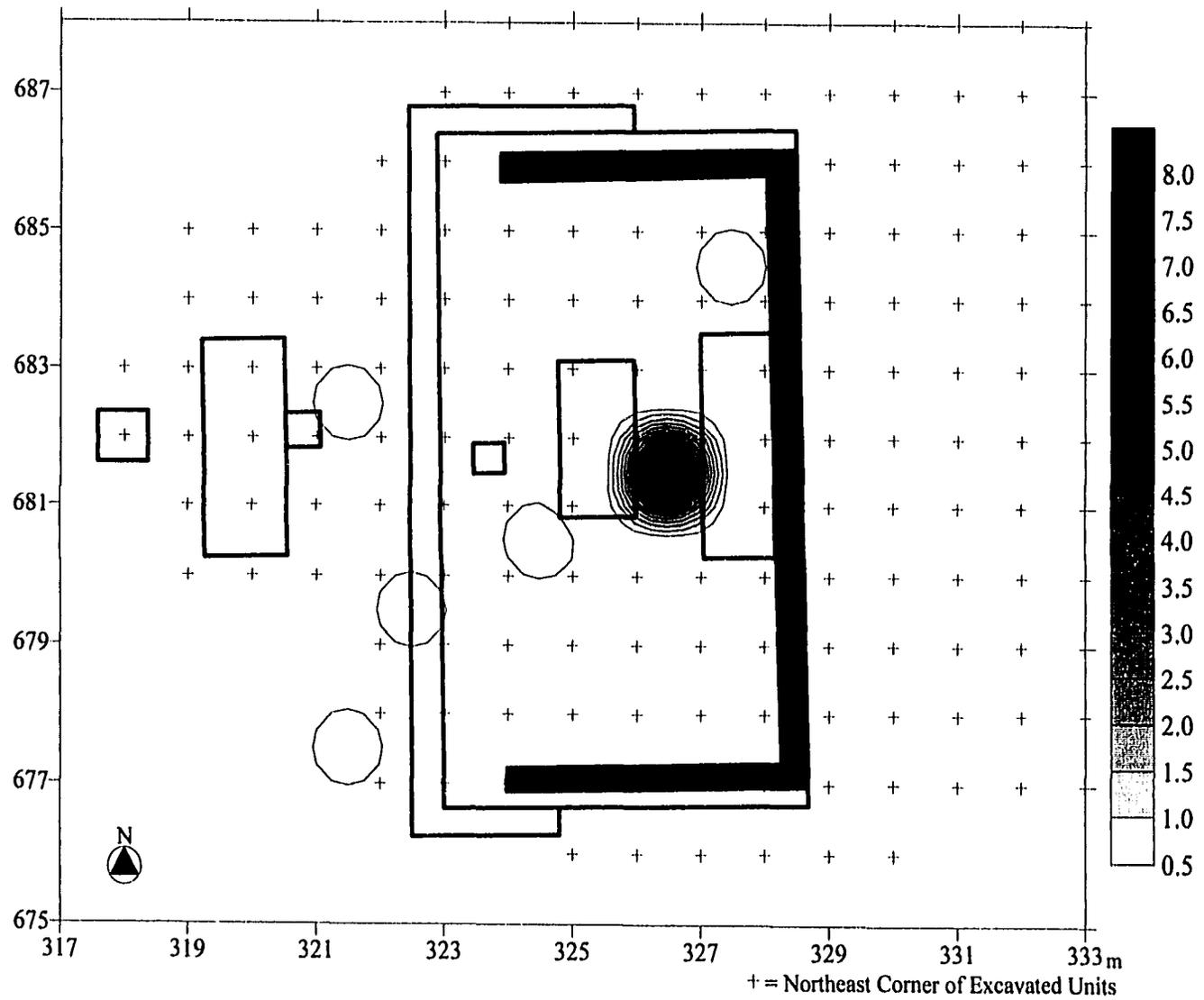


Figure 9-40. Zacpetén, Str. 720 and 721, Gotas Composite Censer Sherds.

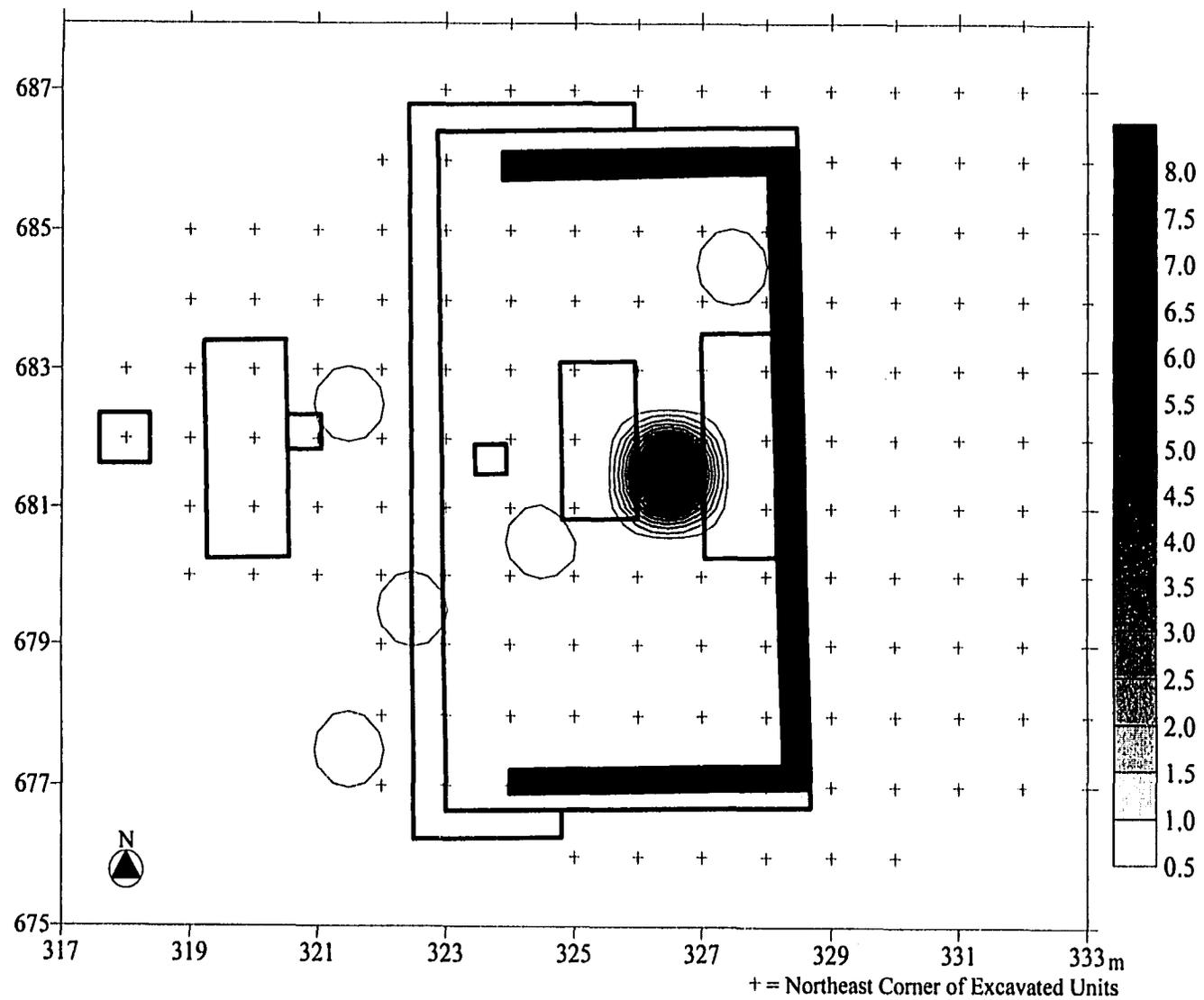


Figure 9-41. Zacpetén, Str. 720 and 721, Kulut Modeled Censer Sherds.

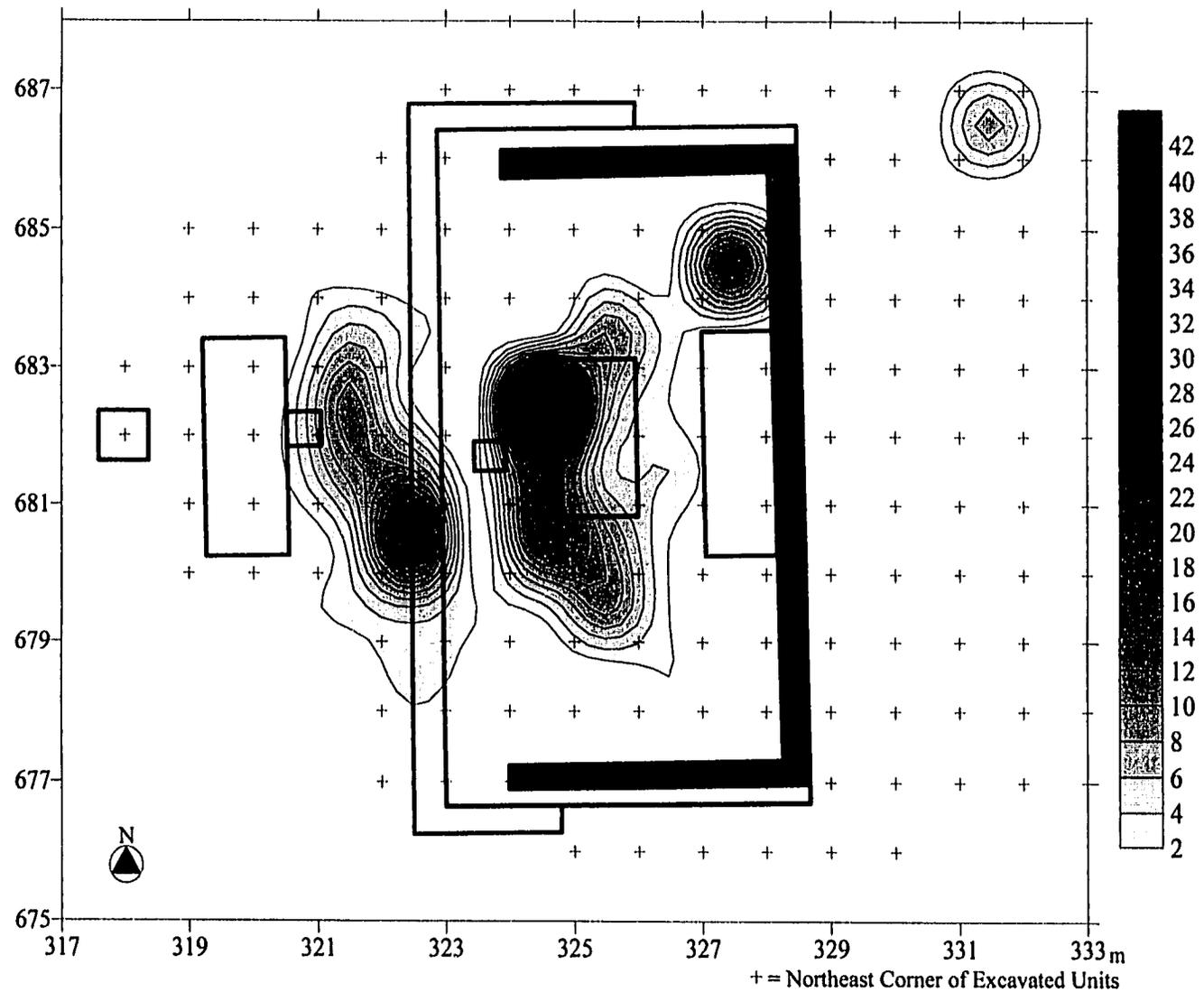


Figure 9-42. Zacpetén, Str. 720 and 721, Patojo Modeled var. Patojo.

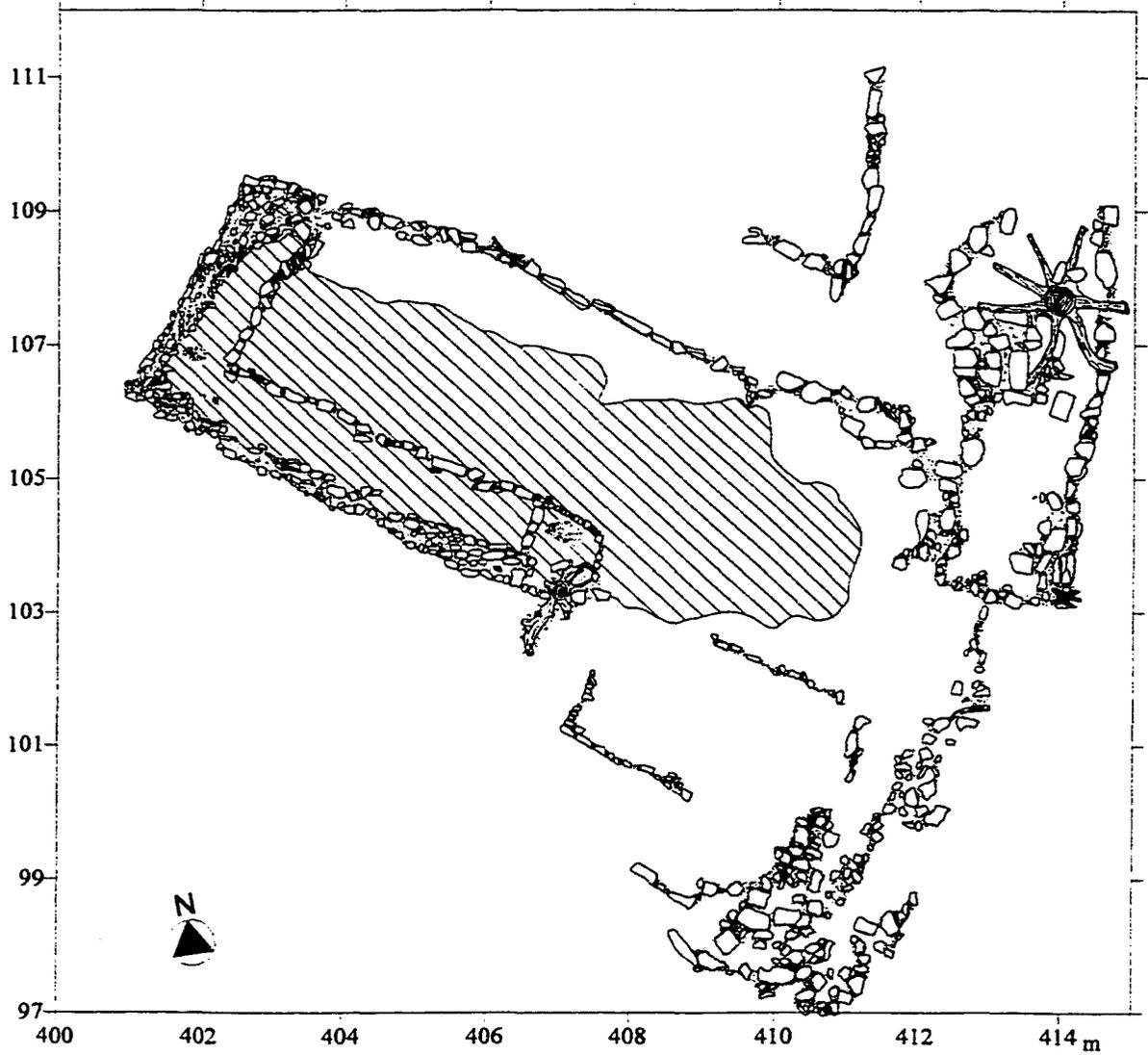


Figure 9-43. Zacpetén, Str. 732, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

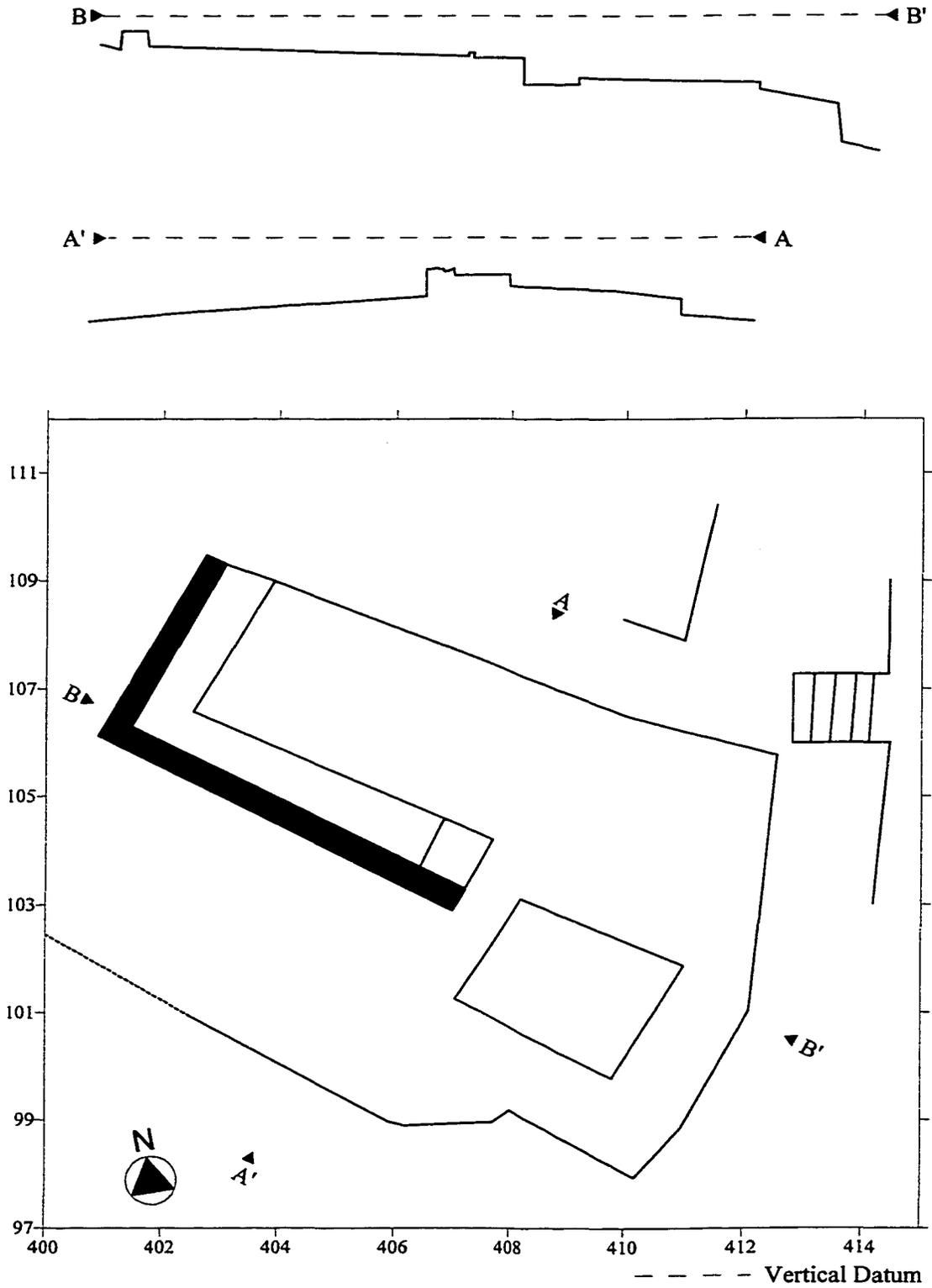


Figure 9-44. Zacpetén, Str. 732, Plan and Cross-Sections.

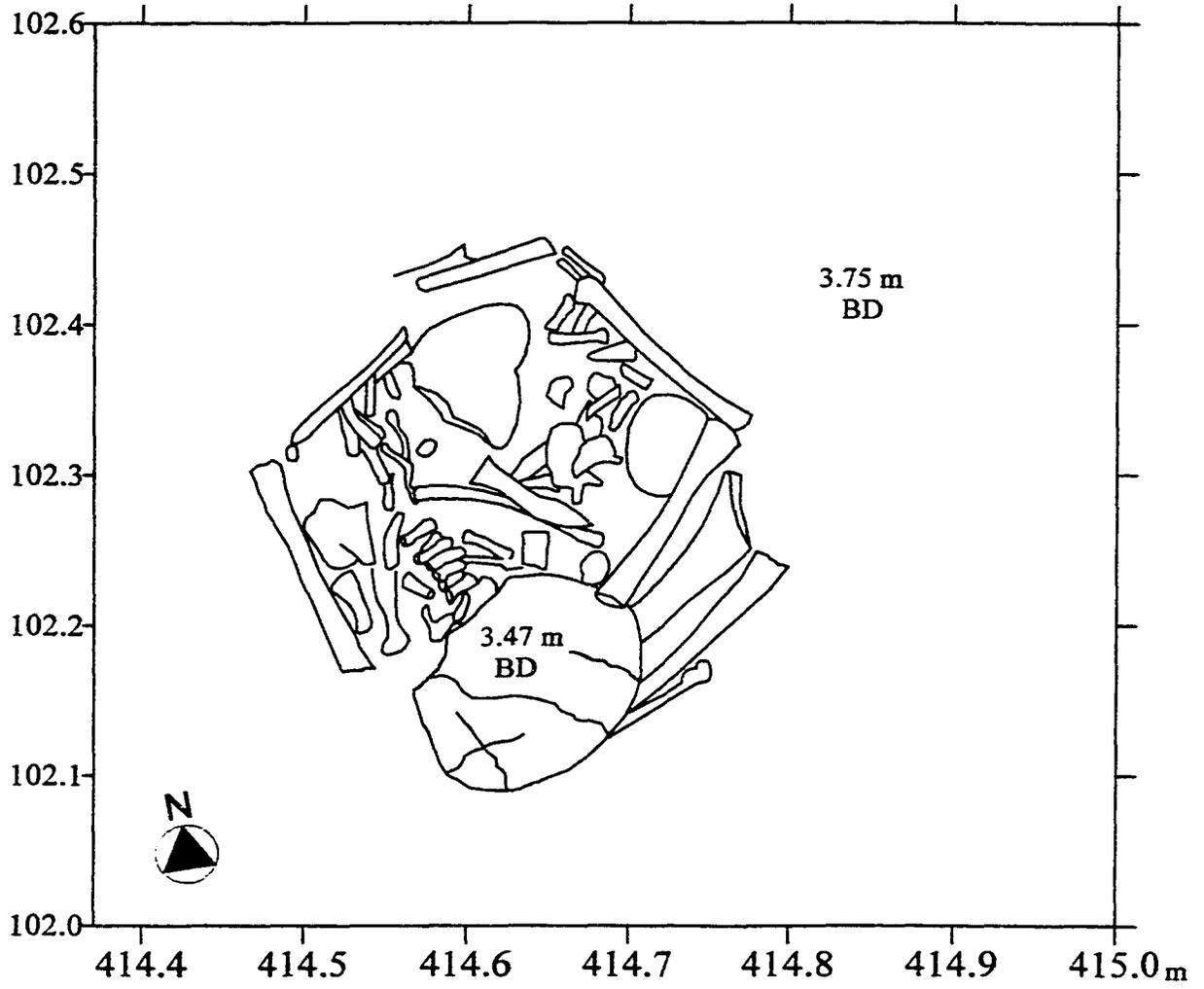


Figure 9-45. Zacpetén, Str. 732, Burial 732-1.

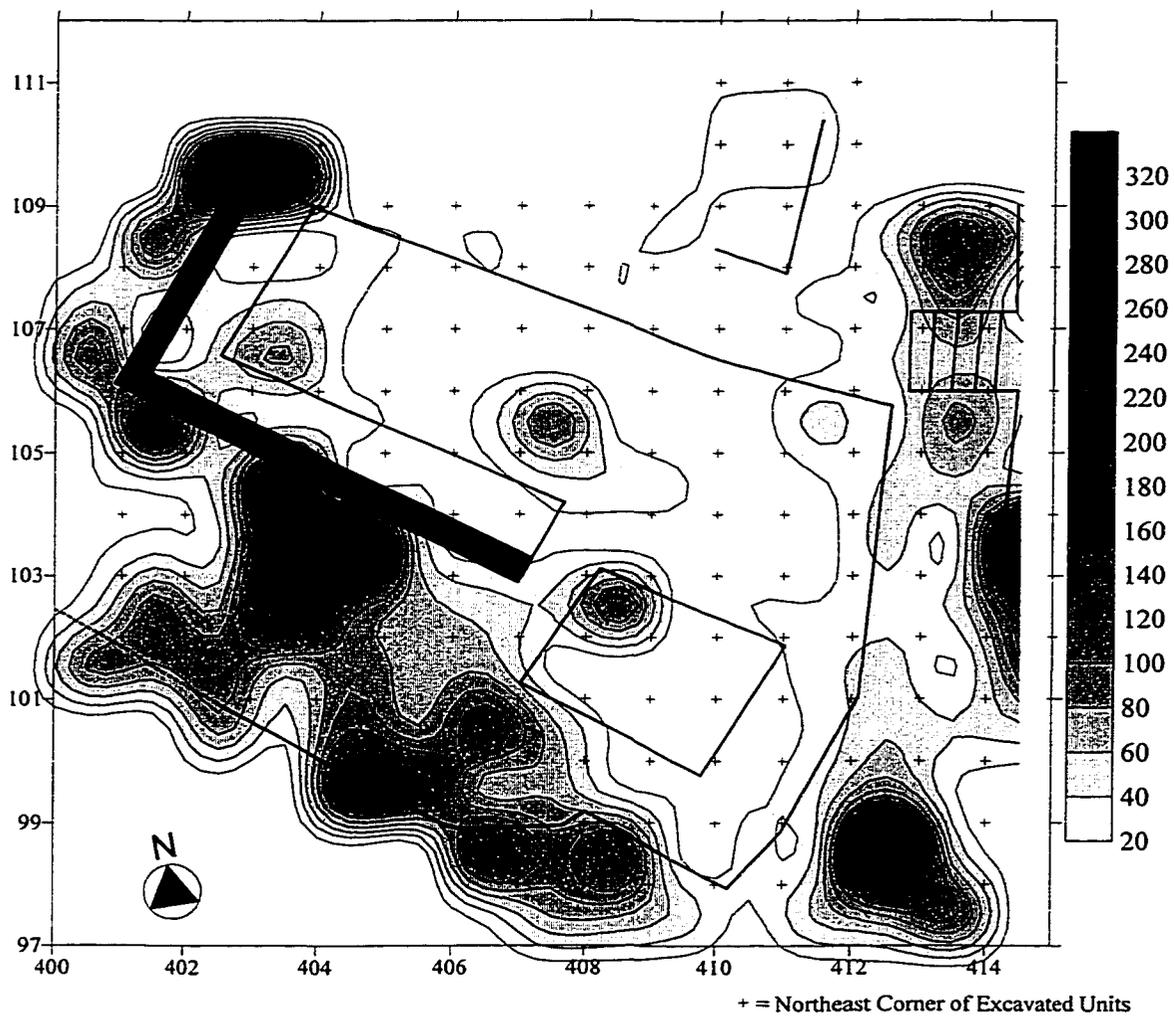
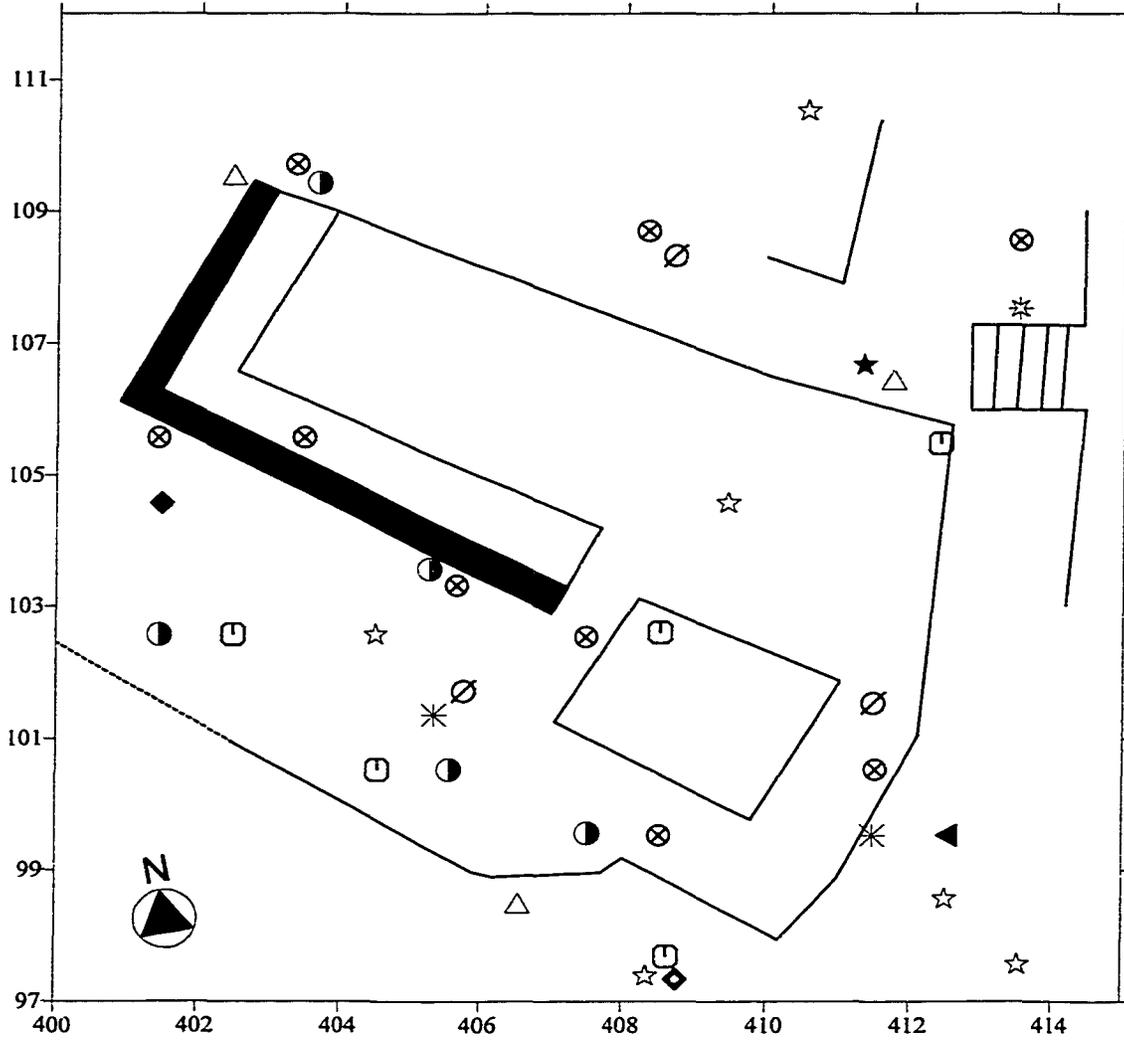


Figure 9-46. Zacpetén, Str. 732, Miscellaneous Ceramics.



MAP SYMBOLS:

- ▲ Axe, Greenstone/ Serpentine
- ☆ Biface, Chert
- ★ Biface, Obsidian
- ◆ Core, Obsidian
- ◇ Greenstone, Misc.
- ◻ Hammerstone, Chert
- △ Lance/ Knife Point, Chert
- ⊗ Mano/ Mano Fragment
- ∅ Mano, Smooth River Gravel
- Metate/ Metate Fragment
- ✱ Scraper, Chert
- ✱ Uniface, Chert

Figure 9-47. Zacpetén, Str. 732, Uncommon Lithic Artifacts.

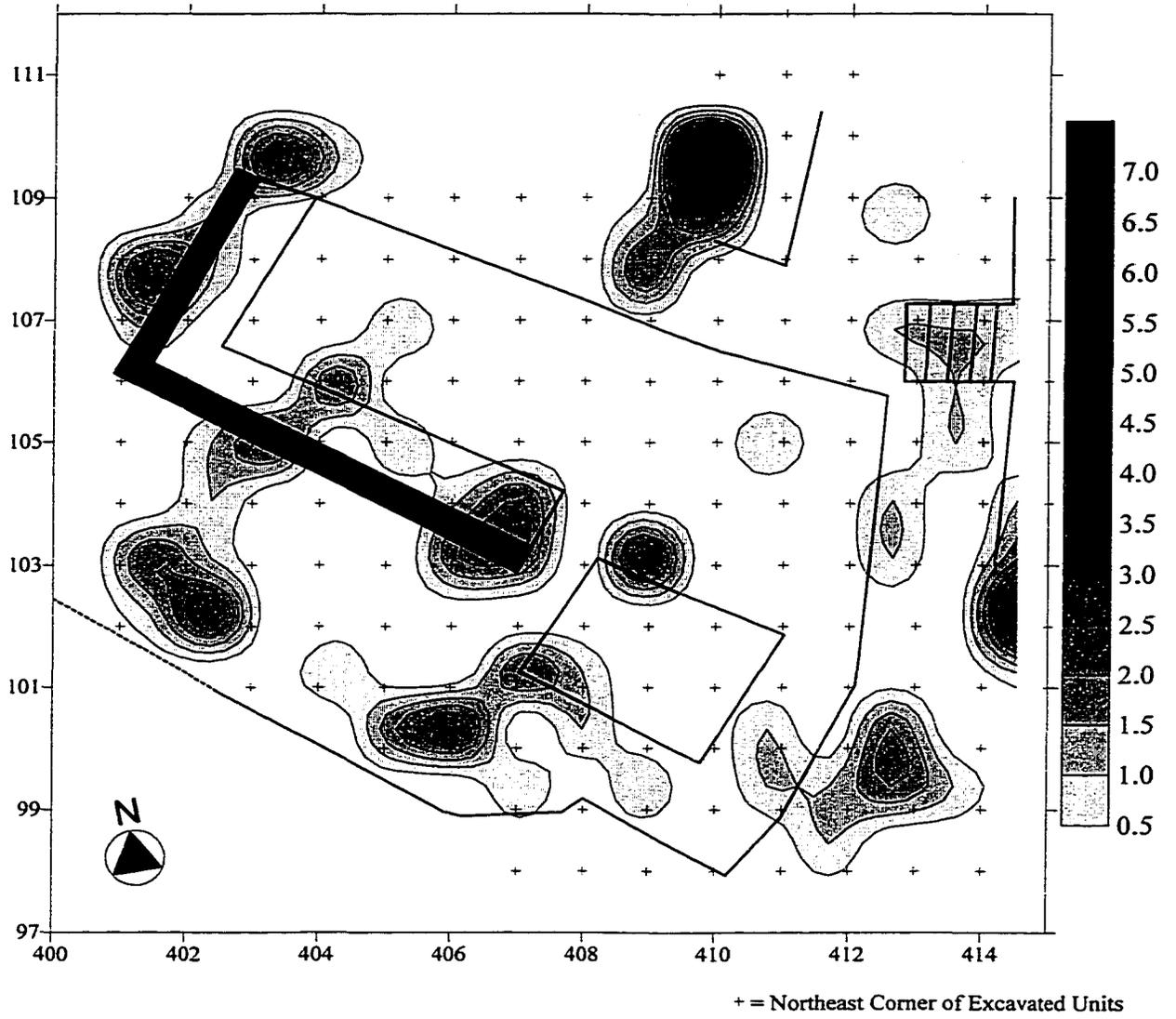


Figure 9-48. Zacpetén, Str. 732, Net Weights.

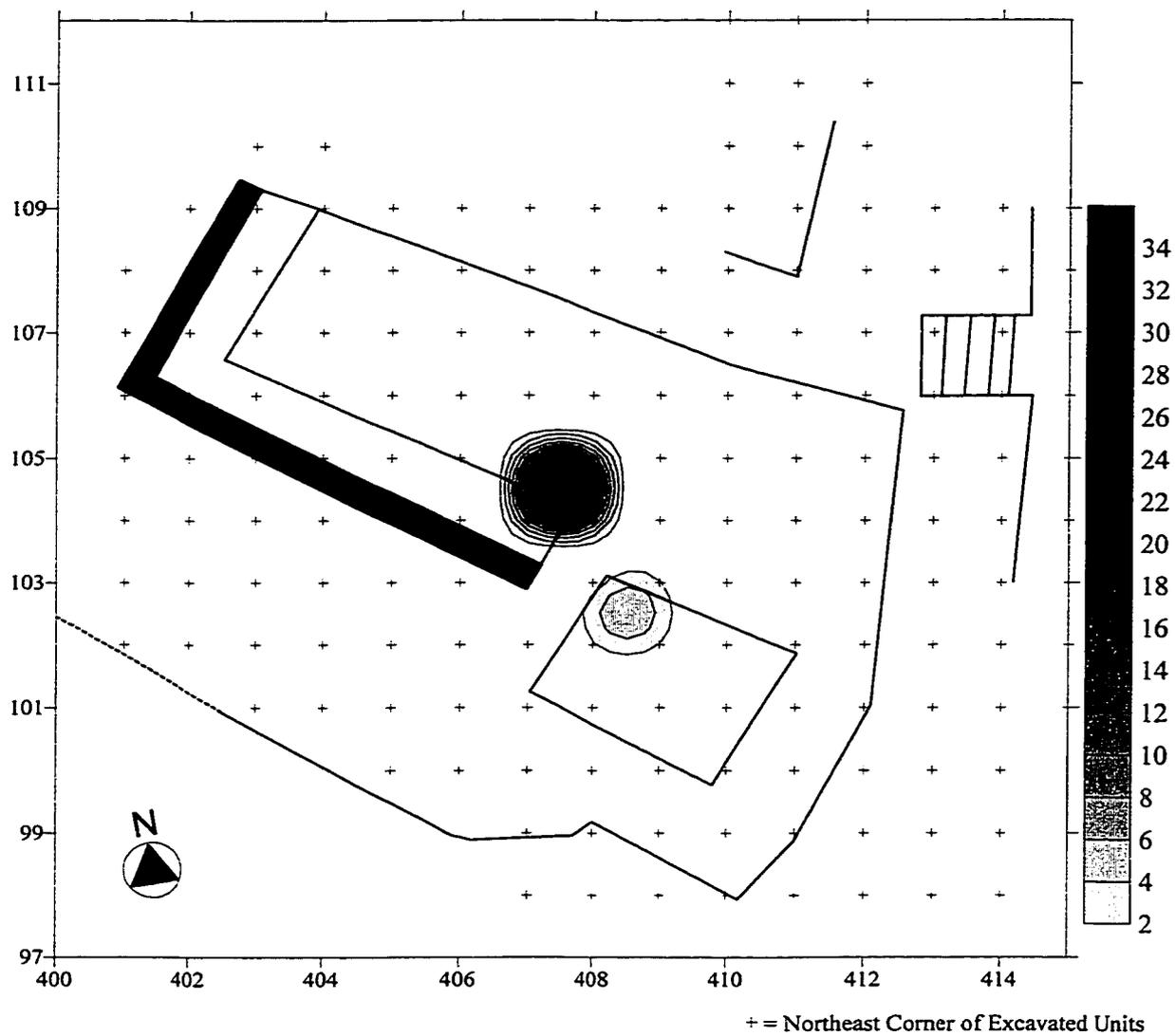


Figure 9-49. Zacpetén, Str. 732, Mumul Composite Censer Sherds.

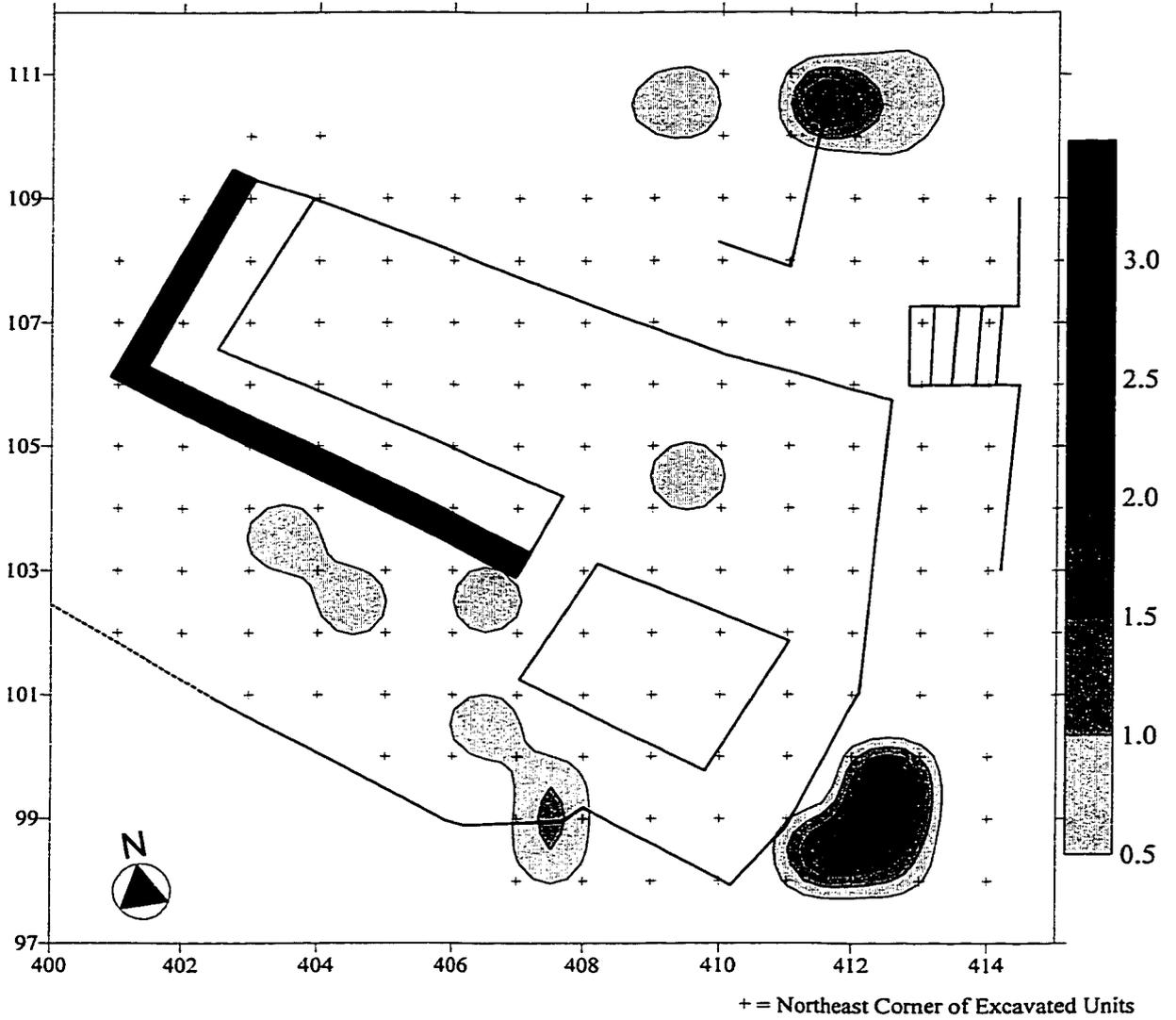


Figure 9-50. Zacpetén, Str. 732, La Justa/Extranjeras Censer Sherds.

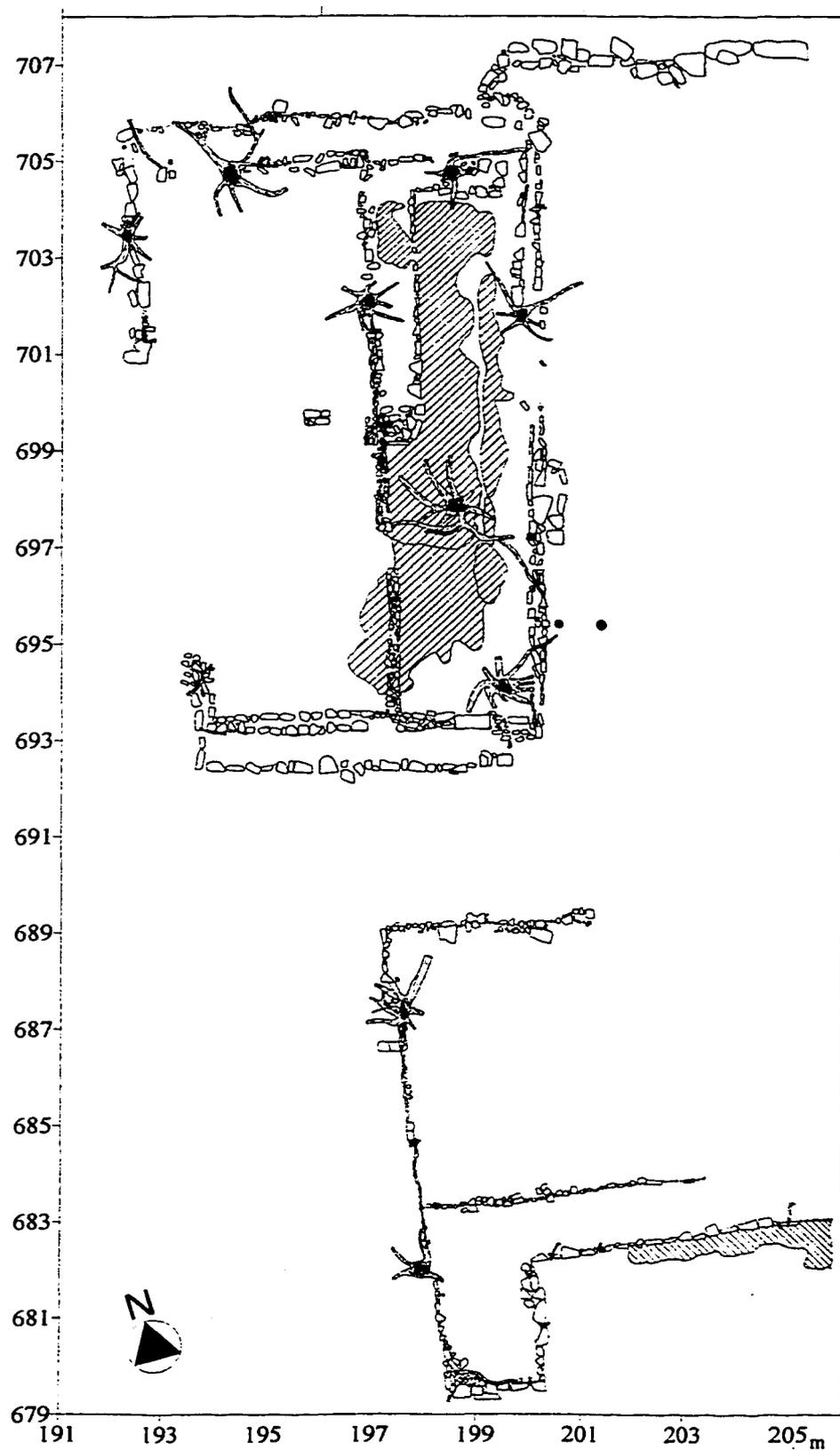


Figure 9-51. Zacpetén, Strs. 747 and 748, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

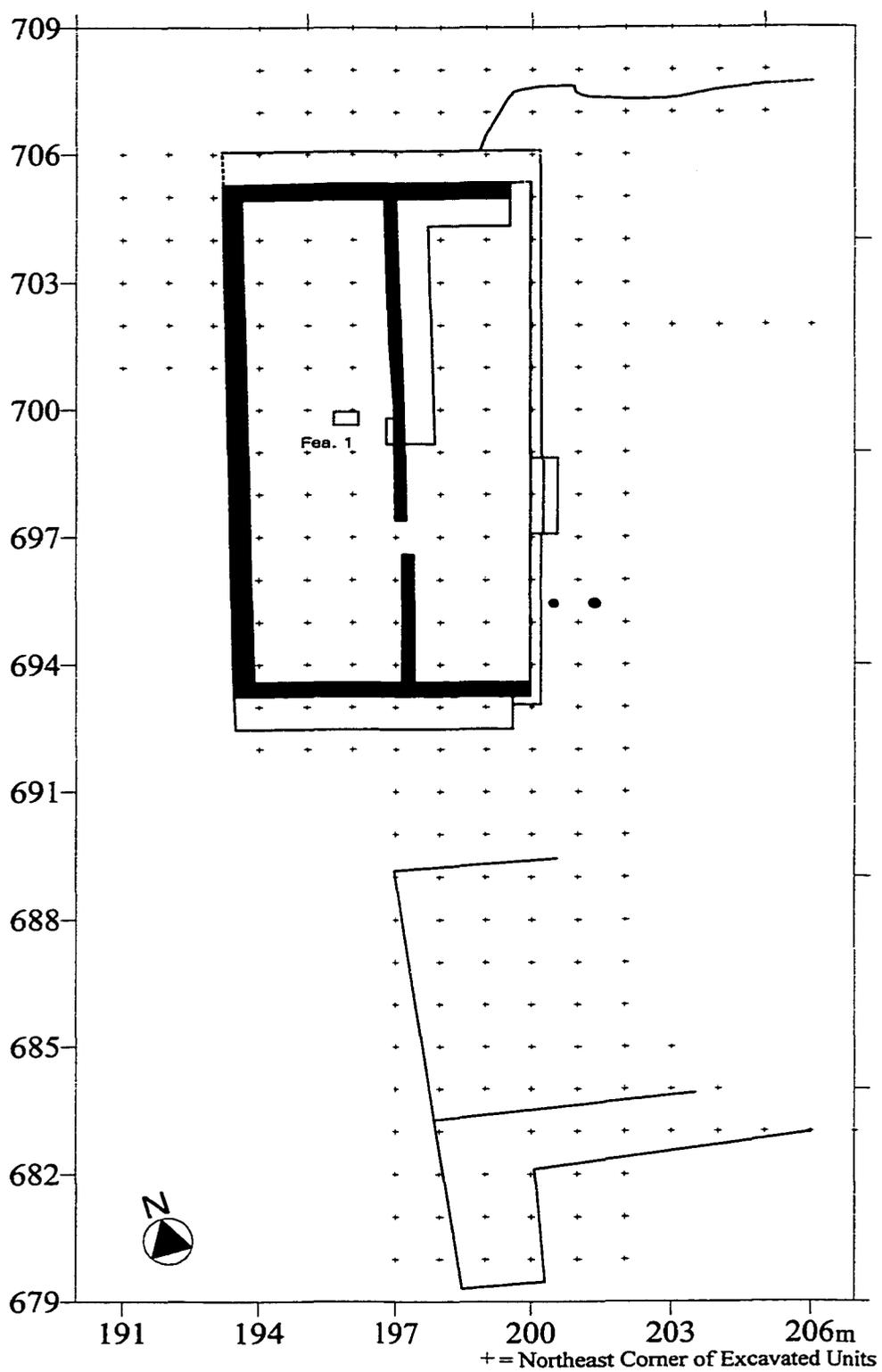


Figure 9-52. Zacpetén, Strs. 747 and 748, Plan and Cross-Sections.

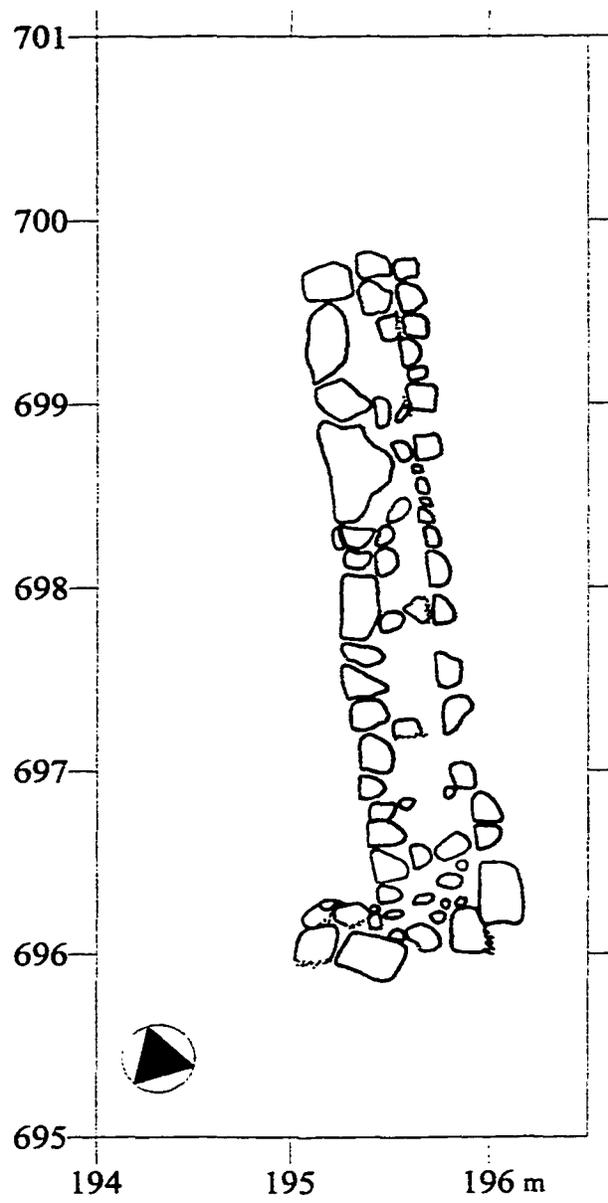


Figure 9-53. Zacpetén, Str. 747, First Construction.

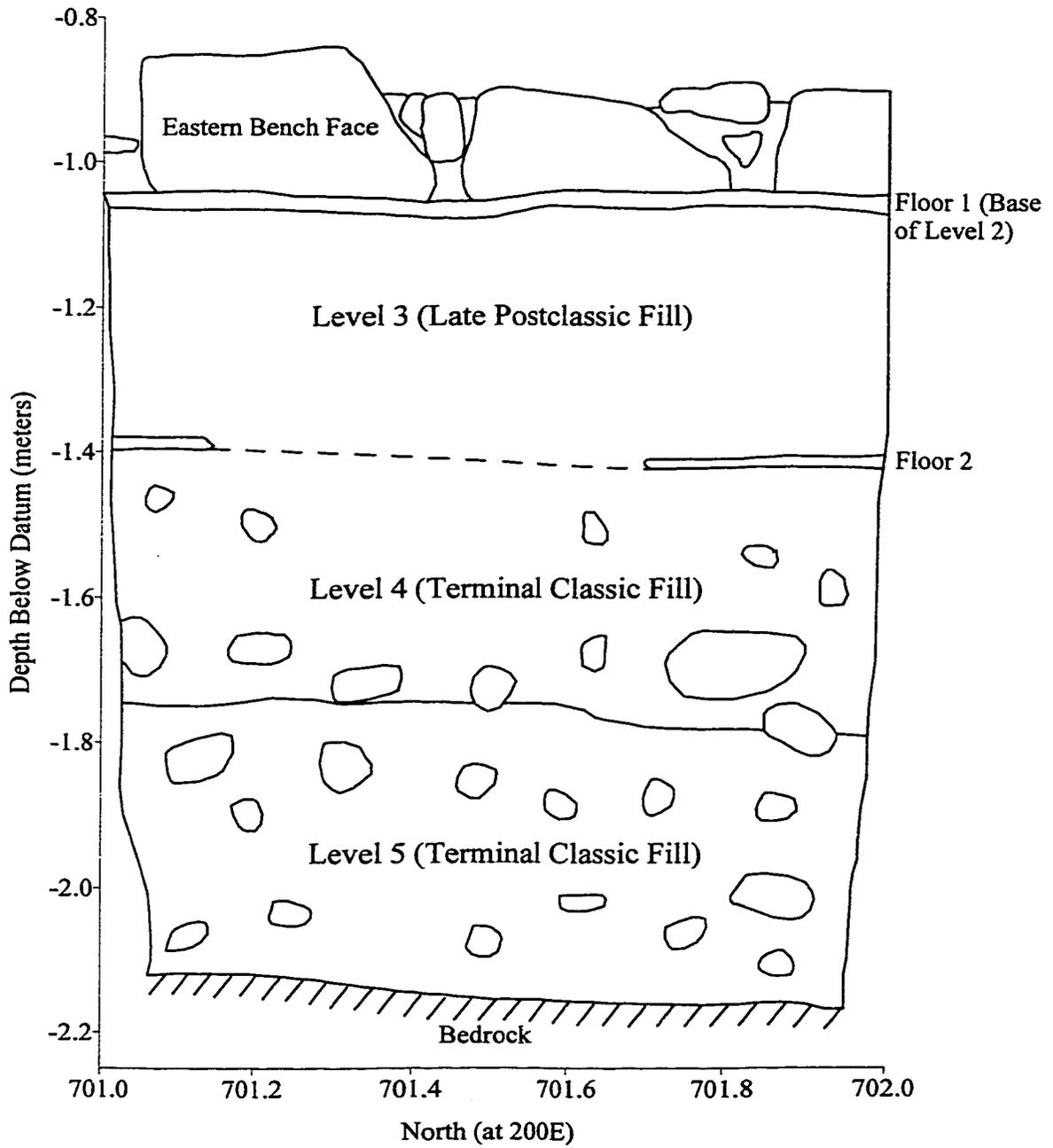


Figure 9-54. Zacpetén, Str. 747, Test Unit 702, 199, West Profile.

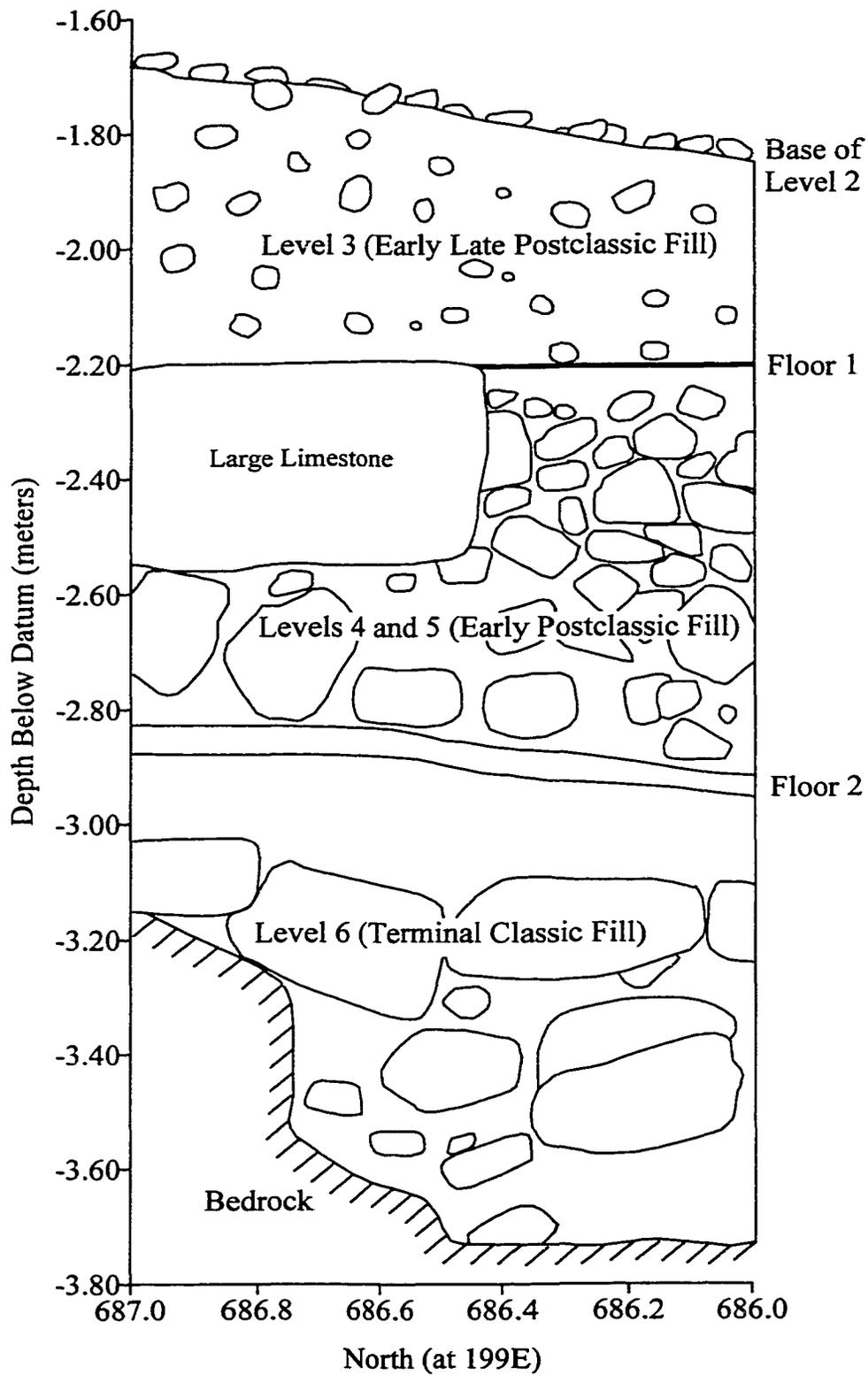


Figure 9-55. Zacpetén, Str. 748, Test Unit 687, 199, East Profile.

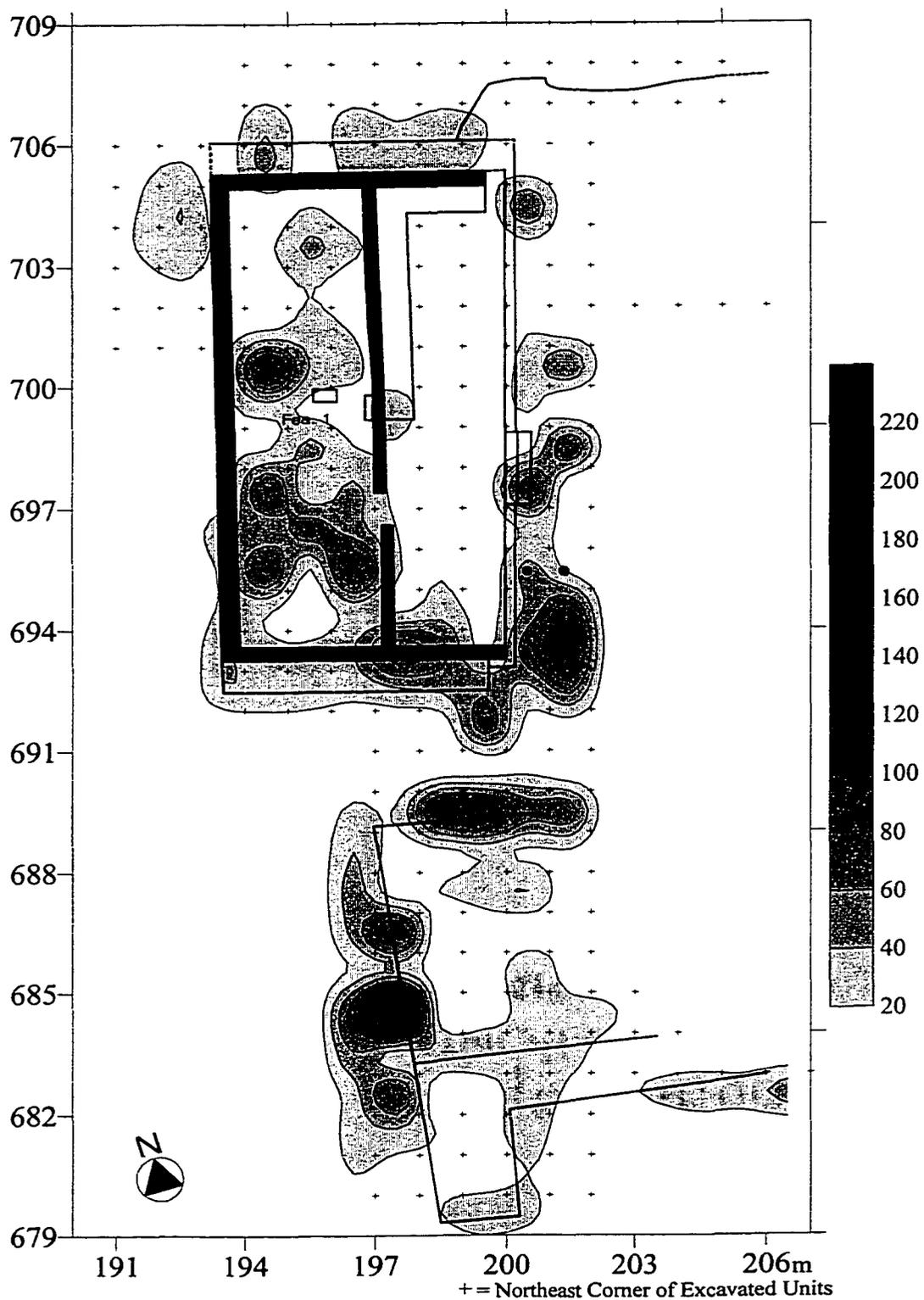


Figure 9-56. Zacpetén, Strs. 747 and 748, Miscellaneous Ceramic Sherds.

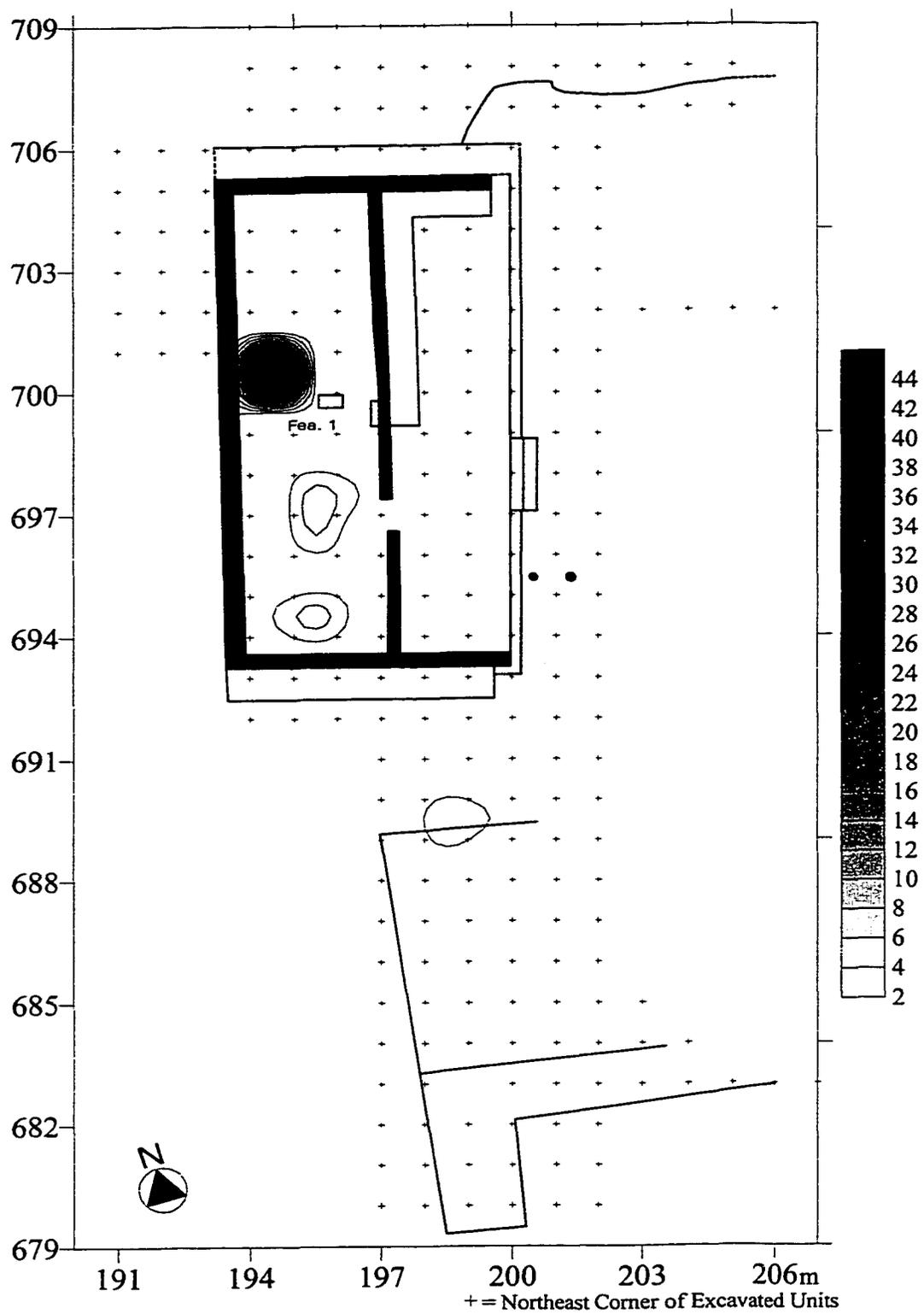


Figure 9-57. Zacpetén, Strs. 747 and 748, Net Weights.

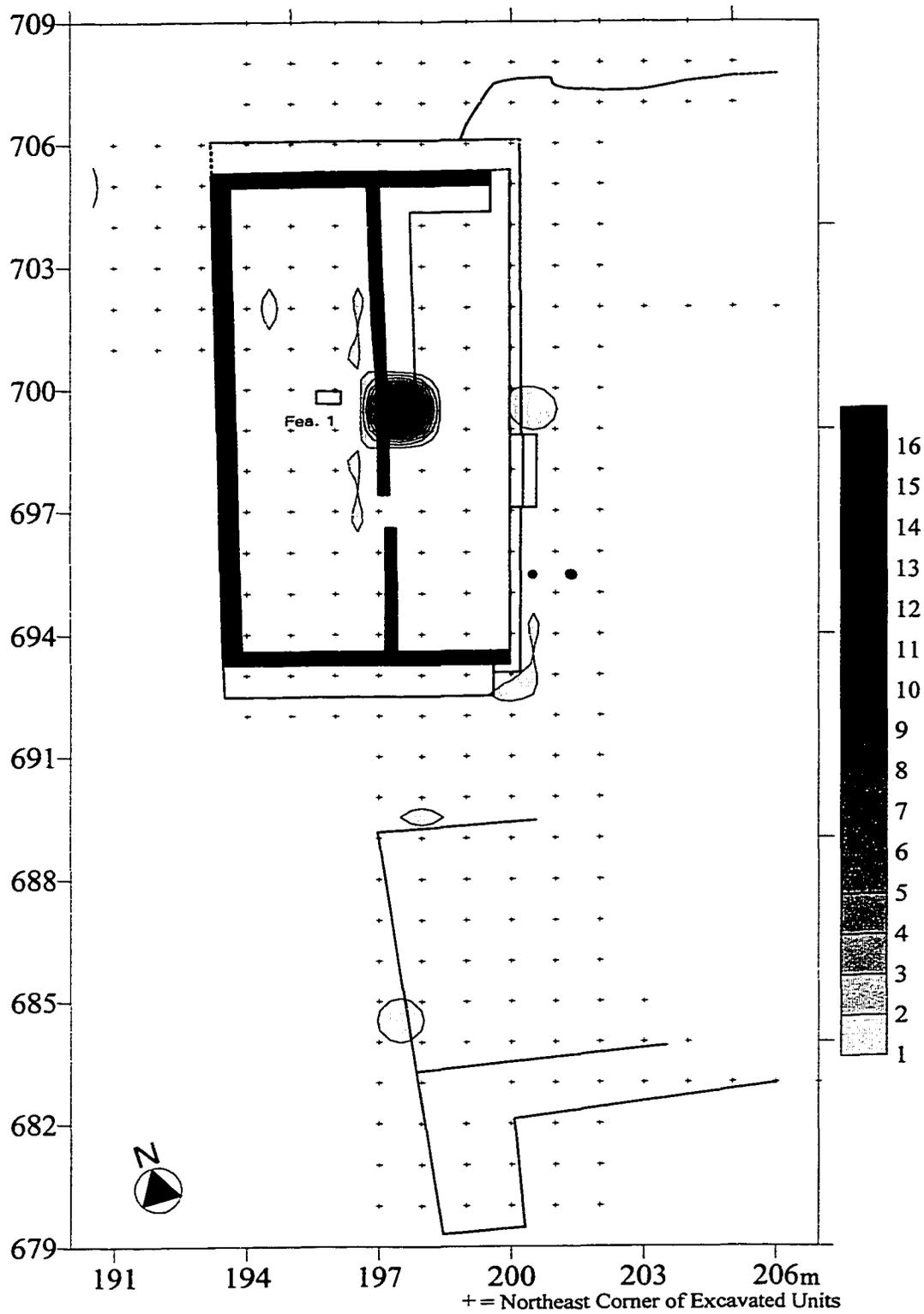


Figure 9-58. Zacpetén, Strs. 747 and 748, Obsidian Debitage and Flakes.

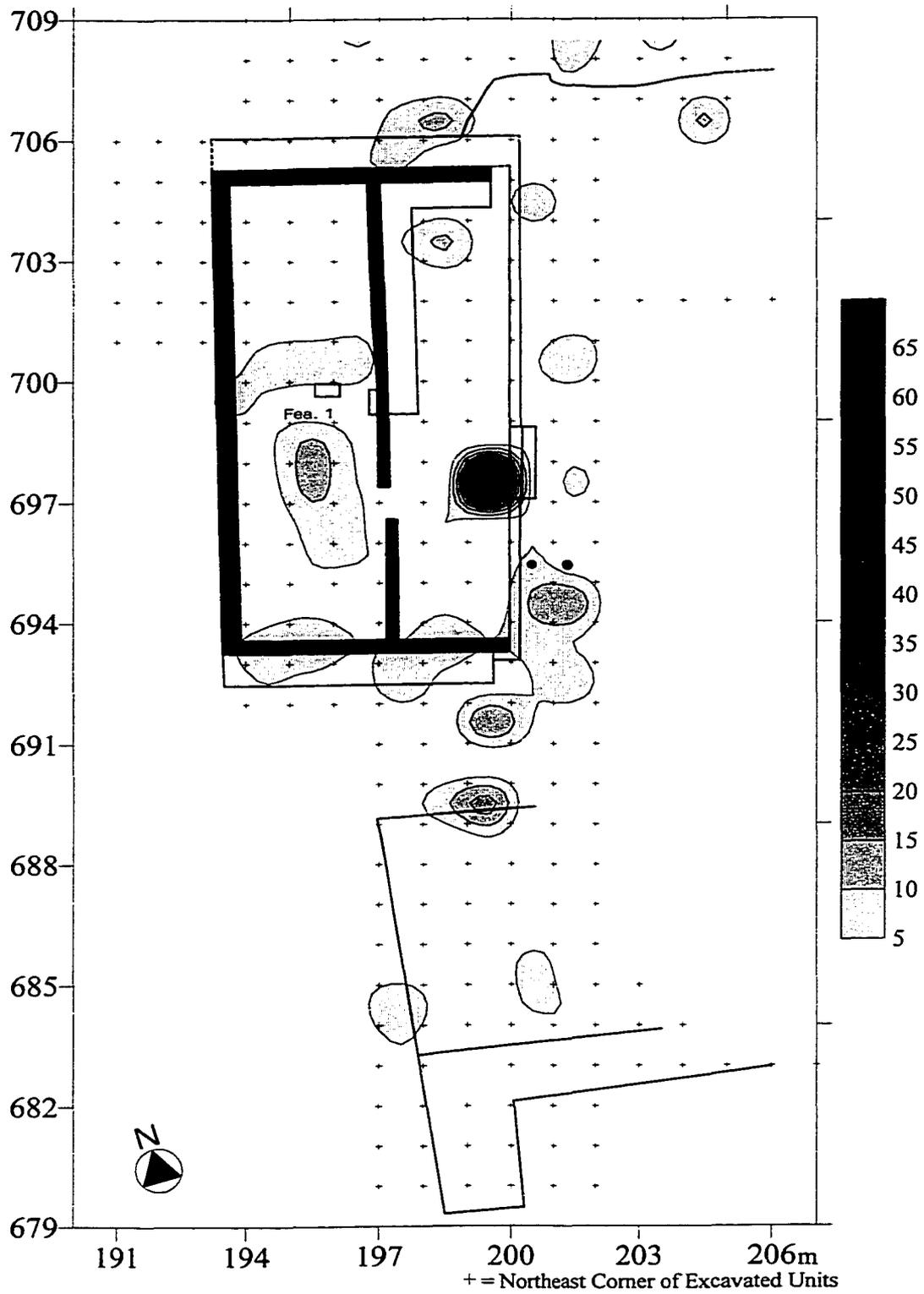


Figure 9-59. Zacpetén, Strs. 747 and 748, Chert Debitage and Flakes.

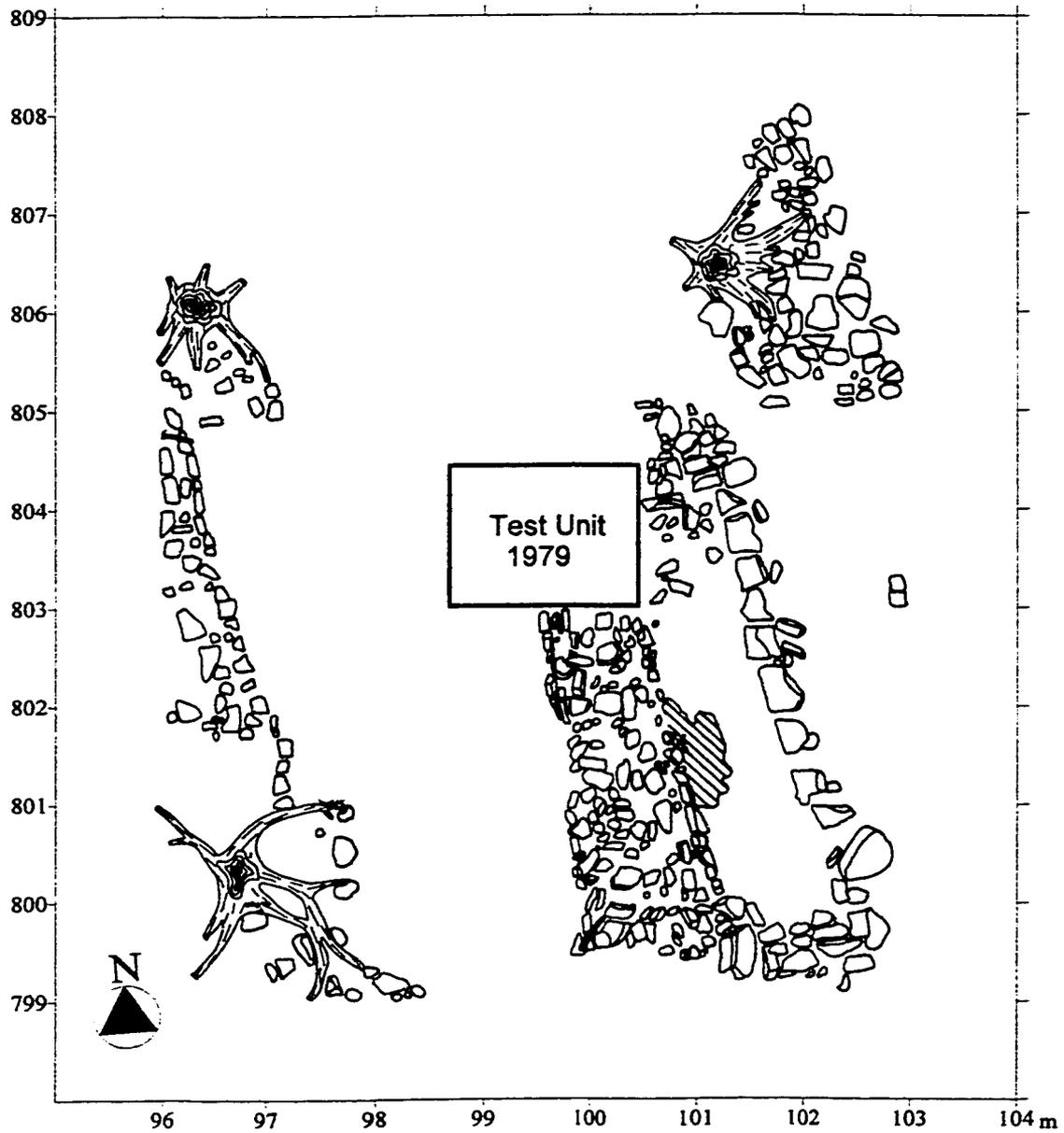


Figure 9-60. Zacpetén, Strs. 758, Plan of Masonry and Plaster Surfaces.

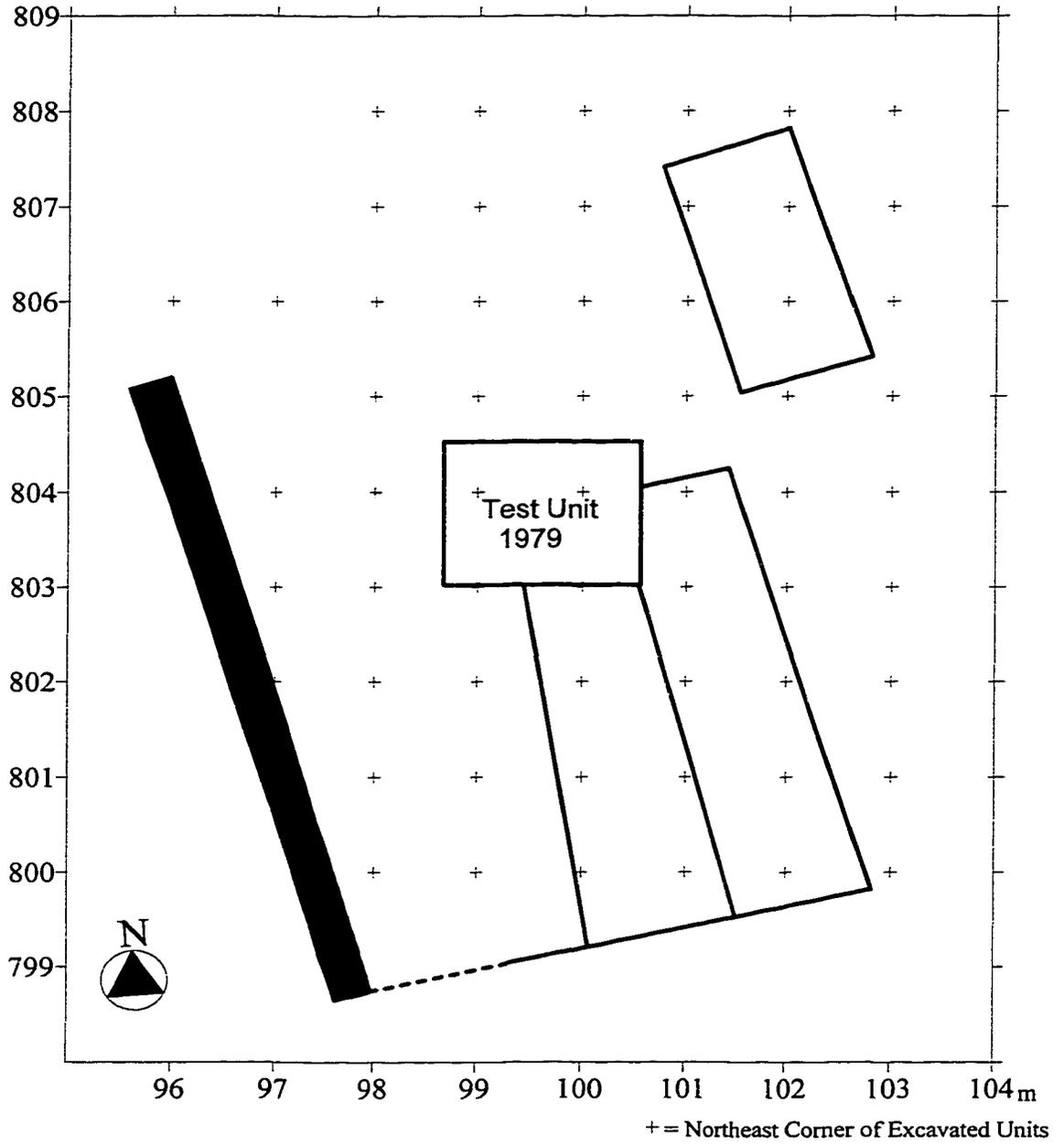


Figure 9-61. Zacpetén, Strs. 758, Plan and Cross-Sections.

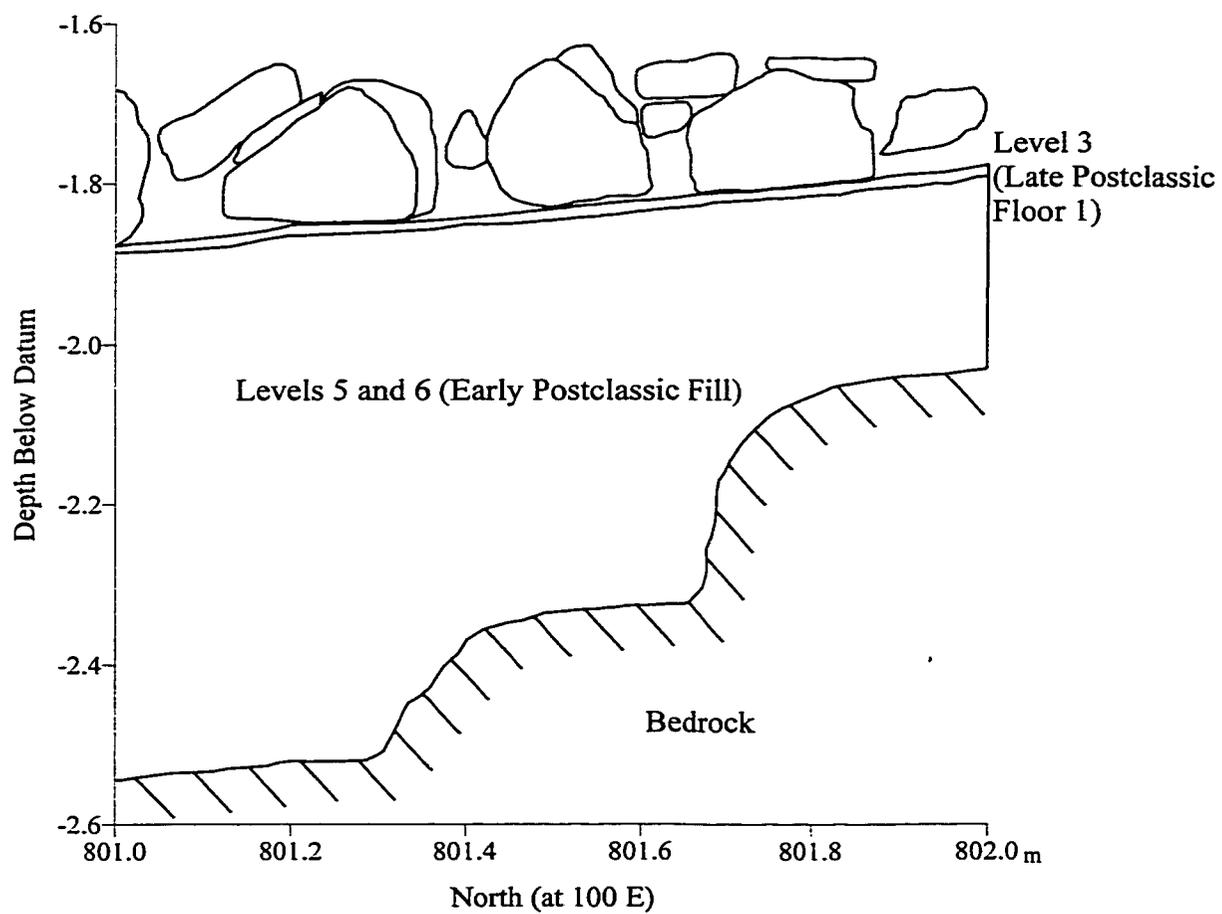


Figure 9-62. Zacpetén, Strs. 758, Test Unit 802, 101, West Profile.

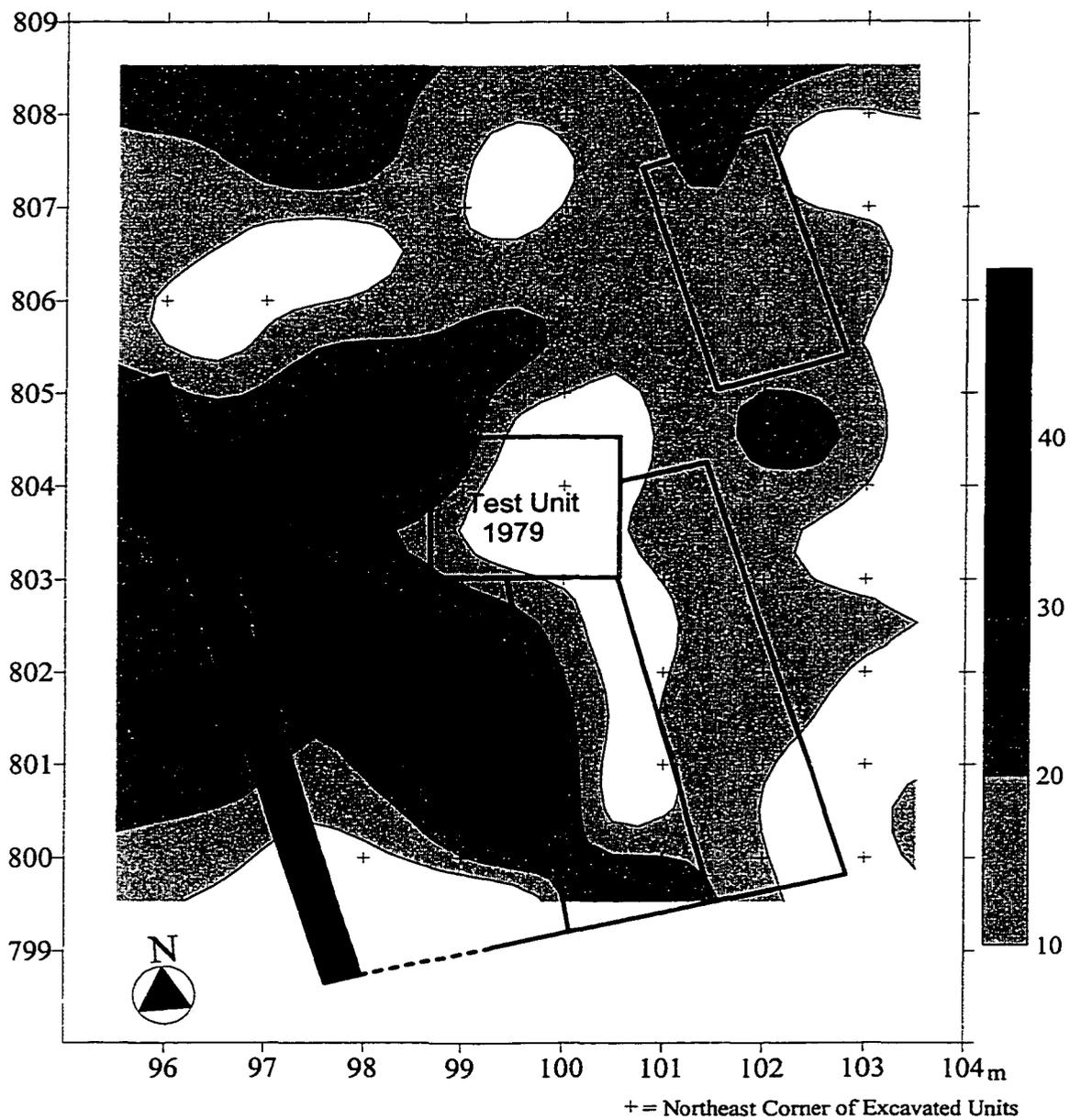


Figure 9-63. Zacpetén, Strs. 758, Miscellaneous Ceramic Sherds.

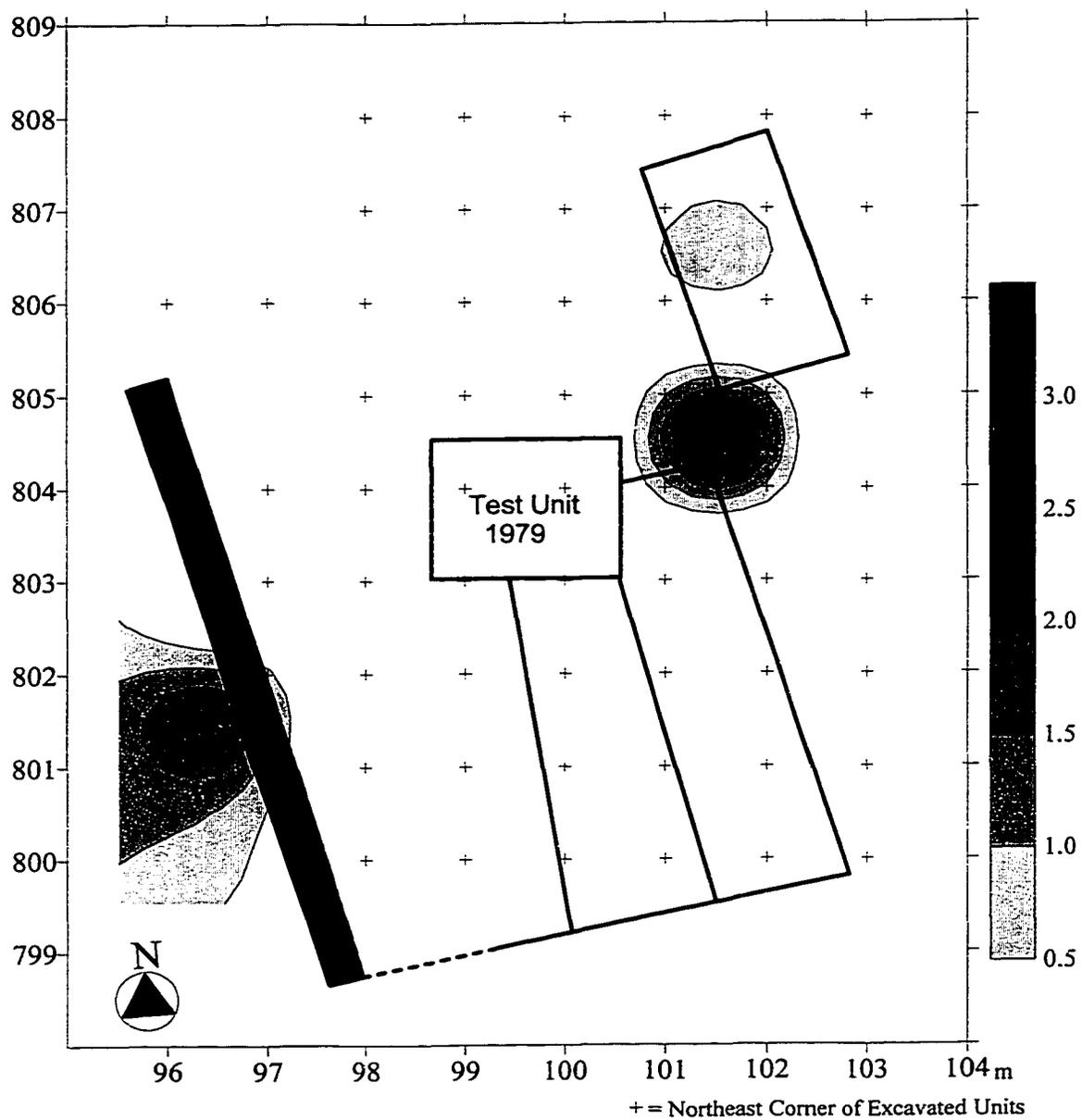


Figure 9-64 Zacpetén, Strs. 758, Non-Effigy Censer Sherds.

Table 9-1. Basic Architectural Features of Residences at Zacpetén.

<b>Structure</b>	<b>719</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>758</b>
<b>Area of Superstructure (m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	225.60	95.20	92.66	40.43	33.73
<b>Basal Platform</b>	P	P	P	P	P
<b>Stairway</b>	P	P		P	P
<b>Bench</b>	P	P	P	P	P
<b>Bench Shape</b>	L	L	L	I	I
<b>Masonry Rectangle</b>			P	P	P
<b>Plastered Front Room</b>	P	P	P		P
<b>Interior Wall</b>	P	P	P		
<b>Masonry Enclosed Back Room</b>	P	P			
<b>Extended Interior Wall</b>	P	P			
<b>Metate Feature</b>	P	P			
<b>Elaborately Painted Bench</b>	P				

P = Present

## CHAPTER 10: INTRA- AND INTER-SITE COMPARISONS OF RITUAL AND ARCHITECTURE

The various buildings at Zacpetén were not randomly constructed without connection to one another and to the past. They were combined into groups with precise arrangements and architectural relationships. All excavated buildings at Zacpetén can be grouped into specific types by form and structures within each type have corresponding activity areas. This chapter compares the architecture and activity areas in buildings and groups of Zacpetén with each other and with other sites to discern the degree of internal conformation at Zacpetén and how similar its groups are to those of other sites in Petén, Belize, and Yucatán. The ultimate goal is to determine whether ritual assemblages clearly define the location of the Kowoj in Petén and if these architectural groups suggest relationships with their purported homeland, Mayapán.

### Specific Building Types

#### Temples

The three temples or multiple-deity god houses excavated at Zacpetén were Str. 602 of Group A, Str. 764 of Group C, and Str. 721 of Group 719 (Figure 7-1, 8-1, and 9-9). Str. 632, which lies just north of Group A, appears to have been another domestic temple with a layout similar to Str. 721 including a building analogous to Str. 720, but neither were excavated. Of the three excavated temples, Str. 602 and 764, the two public temples, are the most similar. Both are medial structures on the east side of the plaza

facing west. The third terrace of their platforms is offset from the first two; hence, public temple superstructures, like oratorios, rest to the rear of their platforms. The superstructures have a medial altar, interior altar, square masonry columns, and an L-shaped bench on the south side. Furthermore, the façades of both buildings are partially composed of soft cut limestone borrowed from earlier constructions. Minor differences in the two buildings include an upper west stairway, north stairway, and niche in Str. 602, which were not present in Str. 764, and Str. 764 has five doorways rather than three. While Str. 764 had a larger superstructure with an interior area of 89.7 m<sup>2</sup> compared to 55.4 m<sup>2</sup> in Str. 602, their proportions were about the same with the depth-to-width ratio of the former being 46.9% and of the latter 45.8%. The similarity in ratios suggests standardized proportions.

Str. 721 shares many similarities with the two public temples, but rests on a low basal platform, has no masonry columns, and no bench. The features it shares with Str. 602 and 764 are the medial and interior altars, which were central to ritual activities of the buildings. In addition, soft cut limestone and plaster decorates its façade like the other temples. Like Str. 764 and 602, Str. 721 faces west. The only other Late Postclassic buildings at Zacpetén clearly facing to the west are Str. 632, another domestic temple, and Strs. 605 and 1002, both oratorios. Western directionality is found only in ceremonial buildings at Zacpetén.

Ritual activities in all temples at Zacpetén focused upon large image effigy censers depicting multiple deities concentrated in the west half or front of the building. Str. 721 included a large number of deity faces relative to the rest of the image sherds recovered. Given the late date of Group 719, the sherds may have been removed from

the two public temples. As seen in Cache 3 of Str. 766, censer faces had residual power after their use and may have been held as relics by the occupants of Group 719. In both public temples, the area east of the interior altar included red-slipped sherds, including drums and quincunx cups. Some activities along the medial axes crosscutting the east/west division including the use of small ceramic cups, which may have been utilized for both food and liquid offerings and ritualized consumption of *balché* by participants. Str. 721 had few red-slipped sherds inside the superstructure and had no cups; however, offering plates and turtle carapaces were concentrated to the east; therefore, it was also the location of ritual accoutrements. The west side or front of each of the three temples was obviously the location of the god pots and the east side (back, interior) that of the ritual practitioners, as indicated by the presence of benches and offering paraphernalia.

The three temples had similar activity areas as indicated by the east/ west dichotomy, but minor differences existed as well. Str. 602 had several beads along the medial axis---a concentration absent from the other buildings. These beads were green, red, and black, the same color beads used by the Lacandon to awaken their god pots. The effigy censers in this building were paired. The pairing and beads suggest the last ritual conducted in Str. 602 was a new god pot rite. The pairs may have included old and newly made replacement pots. Str. 764 had a concentration of chert bifaces inside its superstructure, but the other buildings had none. Furthermore, large numbers of human and animal teeth were spread around the platform. Similar artifacts were found on the northern edge of Str. 721, which also had animal offerings concentrated on the west side of a small rectangular altar.

Str. 764 and 602 had dedicatory offerings beneath the floors along the medial axis in front of the altar. The cache of both buildings was rededicated once. The globular cache vessels were very similar, with two lug handles on the sides and one on the lid. The vessel of Str. 602 was red-slipped and of Str. 764 was unslipped. Both held stone mosaic fragments, beads, and pendants; shell; and copper foil. The beads were green, red, or uncolored. The cache of Str. 764 included a piece of coral and that of Str. 602 had a quartz crystal fragment. Neither contained a stingray spine. Some caches may have represented earth ovens (Freidel et al. 1993: 240-241) and burning inside both cache pots may support this. Caches were the Ol or "heart/ centers" of the buildings (Freidel et al. 1993: 215). The heart/ center is the essence, soul, balance, and stability of the building and is linked to cosmic forces. People and things with hotter heart/ centers are more powerful and linked to creation (Fischer 1999: 482-488); hence, the burning inside the cache pot may have increased the power of the temple. A cache was not found buried in Str. 721, but sherds of a red-slipped vessel near the medial axis may have been those of a terminated cache, which is further supported by the fact the building had been burned.

While Str. 764 was most similar in form to Str. 602, its activity patterns are closer to those of Str. 721. The first association is the previously mentioned human and animal teeth offerings on the platforms. However, a stronger indicator is a correlation in the distributions of Patojo Modeled censers, which were the central artifacts in ritual activities in the two buildings. In both buildings, one concentration occurs just west of the interior altar and slightly north of the medial axis. The second concentration occurs outside the superstructure directly west of the southern edge of the interior altar. In both cases, the censers had been smashed and the sherds were mixed in two piles. They had

been smashed and divided, suggesting termination. Further ties between Group 719 and Group C are mentioned below.

Other Temples in Petén. As mentioned, temple assemblages also exist at other sites in Petén including Topoxté and Muralla de León; thus, they should have comparable temples. The temple layout of Str. C at Topoxté (Figure 5-11) is different from those of Zacpetén because it had a bench along the back wall rather than an altar, interior columns, interior walls forming an anteroom and inner chamber, and no interior altar. Furthermore, it had a flat beam and mortar roof (Bullard 1970: 259). Since the columns were modified from round to rectangular, the variation in the temple plan could be related to the fact that the latest use of the temple was a modified version of an earlier temple. The floor of Str. C stood almost 10 m high, which clearly differentiated it from the temples of Zacpetén, which averaged 3.1 m. Str. C also shares many stylistic traits with those of Zacpetén, especially Str. 602. The temple superstructure rests on a smaller platform on the rear of a multi-terraced platform. The smaller upper platform has superior molding and a stairway independent of the lower platform's stairway. The placement at the rear of the platform and extra stairway create a hill upon a hill that might symbolize that the area is most sacred. The hill upon a hill is a common feature of Mesoamerican temples and is seen in Temple 2 of Tikal, the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque, the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan, and many others. The civic temple superstructures of both Zacpetén and Topoxté had benches and square columns. Finally, all temples at both sites face west.

Given the slight formal differences between the temple superstructures at Zacpetén and Topoxté, one might also expect differences in ritual practices, but this

apparently was not the case. While the temples at Zacpetén had no apparent interior divider, the front (west) part of the superstructure was filled with image censers and the back with unique redware artifacts such as drums and candelabra-style cups. The same pattern was found at Topoxté, image censers were found in the anteroom and smashed redware vessels in the inner chamber (Bullard 1970: 295). While the forms of the redware vessels were not specified, Topoxté Red drum sherds were included in the sample. Despite slight variations in form, nearly identical activity areas are evident in the temples at the two sites. The front area is the space of the god pots and the back area is the space of paraphernalia of offerings.

Str. 2, the god house in Complex I of Tipú (Figure 5-12) is much smaller than those of Zacpetén and Topoxté, but about the same size as most temples at Mayapán. Its layout is similar to Topoxté as it has an inner chamber and antechamber. This structure contained numerous large image censer, non-image censer (Foor 1994: 71-72), and redware (Cecil 2000: Personal comm.) sherds like the temples of Zacpetén. Specific distribution patterns are unknown, however.

Mayapán Temples. The serpent temples at Mayapán were placed to the rear of the platform just as they were at Zacpetén and Topoxté; however, none has a second stairway leading to a second platform similar to those of the Petén sites (Figure 5-7). The platforms at Mayapán are much higher than those of Zacpetén. The average height of the serpent temple floors at Mayapán, excluding the Castillo, is 6.2 m as opposed to 3.1 m at Zacpetén. The Castillo platform stands over 15 m high and was clearly meant to be distinctive. The superstructures of the serpent temples of Mayapán are 7.5 to 9 m wide, but those of Zacpetén and Topoxté are greater than 12 m wide. The temple in the Itzmal

Ch'en Group, which was not a serpent temple, was approximately 12 m wide. The interiors of all of the serpent temples at Mayapan are different and the layout of temples changed through time (Winters 1955: 399). The Castillo and Str. Q-218 are the only buildings with interior altars similar to those of Zacpetén and only the former has both a medial and interior altar. Str. Q-143 was constructed similar to the temples of Topoxté and Tipú, with an antechamber and inner chamber with altar. The inconsistency in superstructure form at Mayapán contrasts with the uniformity between Strs. 602 and 764 at Zacpetén. The variability at Mayapán was likely linked to the multi-ethnic composition of the city.

Despite their variability, all temples in temple assemblages in Mayapán's central group have three doorways with serpent columns and/or balustrades and all columns are round. At Zacpetén, Str. 602 has three doorways, but Str. 764 has five. Five-doorway or four-columned structures are common at Mayapán, but most were elite residences or small colonnaded halls. Serpent columns were not found at Zacpetén or Topoxté and all columns were square, but those of Topoxté changed from round serpent columns to plain square columns. Hence, plain square columns seem to have been fashionable in the late Late Postclassic period. Serpent columns or balustrades have also been encountered on Flores Island. These columns may have been associated with religious centers of certain significance, such as the seat of the *may*. Like Str. 764, the temples of Mayapán were painted with various colors and elaborate designs. Ceremonial buildings at Mayapán incorporated Puuc stones in their facades, which is analogous to the use of cut soft limestone borrowed from Terminal Classic buildings in Late Postclassic temple facades at Zacpetén. One major difference between temples at the two sites is the presence of

benches in the temples of Zacpetén, but not at Mayapán, with the notable exception of Str. H-17 in the Itzmal Ch'en Group.

The specific distributions of most artifact types within the temple superstructures at Mayapán were not recorded. Nevertheless, the general temple ceramic content was the same at Zacpetén and Mayapán: the vast majority of in situ ceramics were large human image censers followed by non-image censers and redware (Shook 1954a: 272; Shook 1954b: 100; and Winters 1955: 413). Furthermore, offerings were burned directly on temple floors at Mayapán just as it was at Zacpetén. In one of the temples in the Ch'en Mul group at Mayapán, Str. Q-143, the human image censers were concentrated in the rear of the temple rather than the front (Winters 1955: 401), which contrasts with the pattern defined in Petén; however, the other temples may have had different patterns.

The image censers at Mayapán depicted various deities just as they did at Zacpetén. The most common deity at Mayapán was God D or Itzamna and various foreign deities have been identified as well (Thompson 1957: 620). Censers with images of Chak, the rain god, were sparse at Mayapán relative to his frequent appearance in codices (Thompson 1957: 621-622). Chak is the most commonly represented deity at Zacpetén. The partiality of Itzamna over Chak in censer depictions at Mayapán might have been related to elite preferences for non-agricultural deities (Thompson 1957: 622). At both Mayapán (Thompson 1957: 621) and Zacpetén, image censers depicting goddesses were rare. This does not indicate female supernatural beings were not important. Most, if not all, human effigy whistles at Zacpetén depict women. Whistling was a form of communication with deities and may have been an offering similar to drumming. Furthermore, ladle censers might have been feminine. As mentioned in

Chapter 3, Lacandon ladle censers were considered the mother of the censers and used exclusively in new god pot ceremonies (Tozzer 1907: 110-111).

Lacandon God Houses. Artifact distribution patterns found in the three temples at Zacpetén and Structure C of Topoxté match those of Lacandon god houses. In Late Postclassic Petén temples and Lacandon god houses, god pots are to the west, benches with human ritual participants to the east, and offering paraphernalia in the center. Furthermore, the interior altar running north to south is analogous to those of the Lacandon composed of “palm leaf matting” or “a low table,” which also runs north to south. The correspondence between altars and palm mats is evident on Altar 1 of Zacpetén (Figure 7-33) and many Terminal Classic altars at Tikal, which have mat motifs. Mats may be a “reverse feature” of altars. A “reverse feature” is one that appears to humans in one way, but to supernatural beings in another (Davis 1978: 23). Sometimes god pots are placed on palm leaves that are considered to appear as wooden stools to the gods (Davis 1978: 25). In Lacandon god houses, ritual paraphernalia often rests upon a leaf mat on the eastern side of the building and this mat may have taken the place of the medial altar of Late Postclassic temples. Many Lacandon offering containers, including the *balché* pot, were marked with red paint (McGee 1990: 89), which further parallels them with the red offering vessels in Late Postclassic temples.

Late Postclassic temples differed from those of the Lacandon because they had masonry walls and rested upon platforms, which restricted visual access of those watching from the outside. Hence, not only were persons on the outside not able to give offerings to the deities, they could not directly interact with them. They could see the ritual from the plaza, but were not within the inner circle. Given the layout, it appears

that interaction with deities in temples may have been more restricted during the Late Postclassic period than among the modern Lacandon. This is not to say access was not restricted among the latter as outsiders were forbidden and women were rarely allowed to enter the god house and could only interact with the god pots under extreme circumstances (Tozzer 1907: 92; Davis 1978: 56). The ability to interact directly with deities on behalf of the public was restricted and, therefore, a means of differentiation. Lacandon god houses were social areas as well as ritual areas. If a similar pattern was present at Zacpetén, then, in addition to a closer relationship with divine beings, individuals interacting within the public god house were part of an elite social network.

Ritual patterns within temples at Zacpetén appear similar to those among the Lacandon, but rituals in god houses of the former may have been more restricted than those of the latter are. Given that public ritual knowledge of the Late Postclassic period was also restricted (Love 1994: 3), and god pots at Zacpetén are only found in public temples and an elite household temple, it would appear that only the religious elite had access to the larger god pots.

The layout and activity areas within the two public temples at Zacpetén are nearly identical and Str. 721, a late domestic temple, mimics these buildings. The primary activity areas include an eastern (back, rear) distribution of ritual paraphernalia and western (front) concentration of god pots. While the form of the superstructure differs, the activity areas within Str. C of Topoxté were very similar to the temples at Zacpetén. Most activity areas in Mayapán's temples and Str. 2 of Tipú are unknown, but the artifacts of these buildings were the same as those of Zacpetén and Topoxté, with a clear emphasis on large human image censers and some use of non-image censers and redware.

Finally, while Lacandon god houses are clearly shaped differently than those of Zacpetén, specific features seem continued in simplified form. For example, stone altars were transformed into palm mats. The activity areas are very similar including the western distribution of god pots and eastern location of participants and paraphernalia. Temples were places for communicating and making offerings to deities.

### Statue Shrines

Str. 607, the statue shrine of Group A, and Str. 766, that of Group C, are nearly identical (Figure 7-1 and 8-1). The only difference between the two is that Str. 766A was built adjacent to an earlier circular shrine. Both buildings include a long, low platform topped by rectangular altars and have an independent masonry altar at their ends. Each building lay in front of a temple just south of the medial axis. Furthermore, both were constructed twice and these reconstructions involved an increase in size correlated with the rebuilding of the plaza. The corresponding histories extended even beyond the construction of Str. 766 and Str. 607. In both cases, the long low platforms and independent altar replaced rectangular masonry altars. Hence, the resemblance between Str. 766 and 707 was in form, placement, and ontology. One major difference between the two is that Str. 766A contained numerous caches while Str. 607A had only one preserved cache. Alternatively, a cache lay below Str. 607B, but not under Str. 766B.

The artifact distributions around Str. 607 and 766 matched as well. Most artifacts were skewed to the south suggesting the upper floor surface of the building had been swept in that direction. Patojo var. Patojo effigy censers were concentrated on the eastern side of both buildings. Human teeth and cranial fragments were found around the western altar of both buildings, indicating ritualized treatment of human remains other

than interment. Furthermore, the remains in Ops. 1000 and 1001 of Group A and west of Str. 765 in Group C suggest sacrifice and the sacrificial events could have occurred around Str. 607B and 766B, both of which appear to have been altars. Identical practices were conducted in the same areas of identical buildings. The earlier version of Str. 607A also had activity areas corresponding with the patterns of the later versions of Str. 607 and 766; hence, the patterned practices had some time depth.

Str. 720, which lies in front of Str. 721, the temple of Group 719, shares many characteristics with the statue shrines of Group A and Group C. First, it is a long low platform with a masonry rectangle to its west. Second, the construction ontology of this platform follows a similar path as a rectangular masonry altar preceded the shrine. Str. 720 differs, however, as its long axis is perpendicular to the medial axis of the temple but, as will be seen below, this orientation follows that of statue shrines at Mayapán. In addition, Str. 720 does not appear to have had rectangular altars upon it, but one small rectangular lies to its east. It had few in situ artifacts but, like Strs. 607 and 766, Patojo Modeled censers were found to its east.

Other Statue Shrines in Petén. Topoxté differs from Zacpetén concerning buildings centered upon the medial axis extending from the temple. At Topoxté and Paxte Islands, a small square building lies closest to the temple and a smaller rectangular platform rests west of the former. The latter building parallels the statue shrines of Mayapán and the former seems to be a dance platform that “may have had a stairway on more than one side” (Bullard 1970: 267). No information regarding the artifact patterns of these buildings is available. Muralla de León has a low platform in front of the temple, but nothing more is known of this building. At Tipú, masonry features are present in front

(west) of Str. 2, but a statue shrine is not clearly evident. In front (west) of Str. 1 is what appears to be a long, low platform with an altar at its west end that may parallel Str. 607 and 766 of Zacpetén, but its activity areas are unknown.

Mayapán Statue Shrines. The statue shrines of Mayapán are clearly similar to those of Zacpetén. They are long low structures constructed directly in front of the temple stairway with their long axis perpendicular to the medial axis of the temple (Figure 5-7). This matches the orientation and placement of Str. 720, the statue shrine in front of Str. 721 of Zacpetén. Those in front of public temples at Zacpetén, on the other hand, were placed just south of and parallel with the medial axis of the temple. This orientation seems to be an innovation found only at Zacpetén and, perhaps, Tipú.

Statue shrines at Mayapán contained life-size painted stucco and stalactite statues of deities matching those on censers in the temple (Winters 1955: 403). All excavated statue shrines included numerous human image censer sherds, which is a pattern also found Zacpetén. At least two of the statue shrines of Mayapán were topped by small rectangles similar to the features on Str. 766. These features were gradually added through time like those of Zacpetén. The statue shrines at Mayapán did not usually have associated human remains; however, in one group, small platforms on the side of the shrine opposite the temple were various deposits of human remains including partially cremated individuals (Shook 1954a: 259).

In addition to sharing formal and activity similarities with the statue shrines at Zacpetén, some of those of Mayapán shared similar ontologies. As mentioned, Str. 720 of Zacpetén was modified through time by the addition of small rectangles to the sides of statue shrines. This matches the development of Str. Q-146, Q-218, and H-17a at

Mayapán. The statue shrine in front of Str. Q-58 of Mayapán (Figure 5-8) was originally circular, but later a rectangular platform was constructed adjacent to the west side of the round platform similar to the way that Str. 766A of Zacpetén was built against Feature 766A-3. The similarity between the construction sequences of statue shrines at Zacpetén and Mayapán suggests a similar use-life of the ritual space associated with the buildings. These constructions occurring in the same sequence are evidence of a formal and repetitive ontogeny of ritual space.

Statue shrines are uncommon buildings, but were found in all temple assemblages at Mayapán, Zacpetén, Topoxté, and possibly Muralla de León and Tipú. At Topoxté, taller rectangular buildings are located between the statue shrines and the temples (Figure 5-11), but at Zacpetén and Mayapán, the statue shrines are located directly in front of the temple (Figure 7-1 and 8-1). Upon small rectangles on the shrines at Mayapán were statues or image censers matching those inside the temple. The statues at Zacpetén may have been composed of wood or image censers were used in place of statues. Late Postclassic wooden statues were found in the “Cenote of Sacrifice” at Chich'en Itza (Coggins and Shane 1984: 140-141); their manufacture was depicted in the Codex Madrid (McAnany 1995: 370-39); and described by Landa (1941: 159). Given the correspondence in activity areas and juxtaposition of the temple and statue shrine, a clear relationship exists between the buildings. Both were places where people could interact with deities, but one was a god house placed upon an artificial mountain and the other was in the plaza. At one time, only elite priests may have been allowed access to temples. The general population may have made offerings and interacted with deities at statue shrines outside the *sanctum sanctorum*.

## Oratorios

The size and shape of Str. 614 and Str. 605, the two oratorios in Group A, are very similar (Figure 6-1). In fact, they have nearly the same horizontal dimensions. Furthermore, each had a bench with a medial niche. However, they differ as Str. 605 rests at the rear of a platform and has an L-shaped bench, but Str. 614 lies upon the plaza and has a C-shaped bench. In addition, Str. 605 faces west and Str. 614 faces south. The orientation of Str. 614 seems to have been the result of its placement to block or mediate the borrow pit (Op. 1000), while still facing the plaza. Str. 614 appears to have been constructed earlier than latest construction of Str. 605, as the stones of the bench face had been removed and artifacts were sparse. It was likely built during first construction of the temple assemblage.

The numerous projectile points and two small greenstone/ serpentine axes encountered in Str. 614 also link it to Str. 605. Furthermore, the three unusual and unidentified yellow crystals encountered at Zacpetén all came from oratorios, one from Str. 614 and two from Str. 605. However, the key deposit of Str. 605, the Kulut modeled censers, was not found in Str. 614.

Str. 605 and 614 are similar enough in form and use to allow both to be classified as oratorios; however, differences in their use and placement suggest they were different types of oratorio. Str. 605 was a temple assemblage oratorio and Str. 614 was likely involved in activities associated with the ossuary in the faux-cenote to its north. It also may have been part of an earlier basic ceremonial group. Stylistic differences in the building forms may have resulted from Str. 614 being an older building. Str. 1002 also

appears to have been a temple assemblage oratorio, but this designation is based upon its position and directionality.

Oratorios do not appear to occur in domestic groups at Zacpetén, though Str. 721 would likely have been classified as an “oratorio” by the early Carnegie Institution researchers at Mayapán. While Str. 721 is an independent ceremonial building in Group 719, its layout and activity areas are the same as that of temples, not oratorios. Nevertheless, the interior shrine of Str. 719 contains a Kulut Modeled effigy censer of the same deity as that found in the medial niche of Str. 605. Hence, Group 719 also contained a medial location with a central focus matching that of Str. 605.

Other Oratorios in Petén. Str. D of Topoxté (Figure 5-11) has the form and position of an oratorio in a temple assemblage and the building to its north, Str. E, may be an extra raised shrine or small oratorio. Both rest to the north (right) of the temple and face west. These buildings were recently excavated, but the data are not presently available. The oratorio in the assemblage on Paxte Island may be located south of the southeast corner of the open hall and that of Cante Island is located west of the temple. Str. 1 of Tipú may be a temple assemblage oratorio, but the statue shrines to its west are similar to those found in front of temples at Zacpetén.

Mayapán Oratorios. The oratorios at Mayapán vary in form depending upon the type of group in which they are located (Pugh 1996b). For example, oratorios in temple assemblages are similar to each other, but differ from those of basic ceremonial groups and households. The differences among the buildings primarily concern the presence or absence and shape of columns and the form of the central feature (niche, interior shrine,

altar, or none). The majority of the excavated household oratorios contained cist burials, but the two investigated in the ceremonial core did not. Neither building excavated in the core was part of a typical temple assemblage. One was in a basic ceremonial group and the other was part of a group associated with the central cenote of Mayapán (Figure 5-8b). This group may have been a modified version of a temple assemblage with the oratorio resting adjacent to the Cenote Ch'en Mul rather than a temple. In the Itzmal Ch'en Group, the cenote lies to the west of the oratorio. The fact that some oratorios at Mayapán rest adjacent to cenotes in the western part of their groups suggests parallels between these oratorios and Str. 614 of Zacpetén.

Str. 614 is patterned most similarly to the household oratorios at Mayapán as it has a C-shaped bench, medial niche, and no masonry columns. Str. 605 is also most similar to these buildings, but differs as it has an L-shaped bench. However, like most oratorios, Str. 605 rested to the rear of its platform. The temple assemblage oratorio at Mayapán most like the buildings at Zacpetén was Str. H-14 in the Itzmal Ch'en Group. This oratorio differed from the temple assemblage oratorios in the ceremonial core as it had a niche. It followed the form of a household oratorio, which is not surprising as it was distant from the ceremonial core of Mayapán (Pugh 1996b).

All excavated oratorios at Mayapán contained human image censer sherds, especially the two buildings excavated in the site's ceremonial core. Hence, the buildings at Mayapán were also smaller god houses. However, they seem to have contained a variety of deities rather than a single deity. This could be the result of the fact that no temple assemblage oratorios were excavated or because multiple ethnic groups at

Mayapán brought about diversity in patron deities. Alternatively, ritual practices in oratorios may have changed significantly through time.

The oratorio in the Las Pinturas complex at Coba lies in front of the temple and both face west. This building has a C-shaped bench and contains a stela fragment and circular altar (Folan 1983: 74) and seems very similar to stela enclosures in Twin-Pyramid Complexes, but no such ceremonial groups are found in Yucatan.

Oratorios are poorly known because few have been excavated and reported. However, they have distinct forms that vary slightly in different types of ceremonial groups. The oratorios of Zacpetén are most similar to those found outside the ceremonial core of Mayapán in household groups and independent ceremonial groups. All oratorios seem to be god houses, but a few also appear to be associated with ancestor veneration through a central burial of multiple individuals. Unfortunately, deities venerated in Mayapán oratorios have not been specifically identified. At Zacpetén, Str. 605 is focused on a single deity and Str. 614 seems to have mediated the pit to its north. The deity found in Str. 605 was also found in Str. 719 and appears to have been purposely separated from the other deities. The vessel itself is smaller and the face of the effigy is sunken, perhaps representing a departed ancestor, Underworld deity, or war god.

### Raised Shrines

Str. 601 of Group A and Str. 765 of Group C are raised shrines (Figure 7-1 and 8-1). These buildings include small superstructures with altars resting upon platforms. Str. 601 is much higher than Str. 765, but it was built upon a Terminal Classic or Early Postclassic building. These buildings may have been involved in ancestor veneration though no burials were found within either. No other raised shrines have been

specifically identified at Zacpetén; however, one such building likely lies to the south of Str. 602 facing into the north side of Str. 615. Raised shrines contain paired non-image censers and other offering vessels. Similar paired non-image censers were found on the medial altar in Str. 719 and the interior shrine of Str. 732. Despite their names, both of these features were interior shrines with content parallel with raised shrines.

Other Raised Shrines in Petén. The raised shrine in the temple assemblage on Topoxté Island, Str. E, lies on the northern side of the central plaza (Figure 5-11). Its primary entrance faces south, but it also has entrances to the east and west. The primary entrance has two small columns that distinguish it from the buildings at Zacpetén, but it is clearly in the same position and is the same size and basic shape as those of the latter site. Str. E was recently excavated, but the data are not presently available. Shrines are common at other sites in Petén such as Nixtun-Chi'ch' and Ixlú.

Mayapán Raised Shrines. Hundreds of raised shrines rest within the walls of Mayapán. They vary in form, but most have small superstructures with medial altars resting on platforms, often with a stairway. The basic form is identical to the raised shrines of Zacpetén. The altars in shrines at Mayapán were frequently destroyed and caches removed, indicating termination rites. Most of these buildings, both inside and outside the ceremonial core, contain burial cists with multiple individuals and appear involved in some sort of ancestor veneration. Raised shrines at Mayapán may have contained both image and non-image censers. Thus, the activity areas of these buildings may have differed slightly from those of Zacpetén, which only contained non-image censers.

Raised shrines are found in large numbers throughout the Maya area and in much of the Mesoamerican cultural area during the Late Postclassic period and earlier. A large-scale discussion of these buildings will not be attempted here; however, sites in Yucatán and Quintana Roo have many more raised shrines than those in central Petén. A greater emphasis on pilgrimage may have existed in Yucatán. Apparently, the presence of raised shrines corresponds with non-centralized ritual activity (Pollock 1962: 16). Residences at Zacpetén had interior shrines allowing ritual performances at the household or higher corporate levels. Domestic shrines were also present in the Classic period; therefore, widespread ancestor worship was not just a characteristic of the Late Postclassic period (Leventhal 1983: 74-76).

Raised shrines at Zacpetén differ from those at Mayapán because the former did not contain human image censers. Furthermore, fewer raised shrines are found at Zacpetén than at sites in the northern lowlands. At Zacpetén, activity areas of raised shrines correlate with those of interior shrines in residences; therefore, it would appear that the majority of domestic ancestor worship occurred in the latter type of shrine. However, in public groups, the raised shrine was likely the place of ancestor worship.

### Open Halls

Open or colonnaded halls are narrow buildings with C-shaped walls and benches. At Zacpetén, several perishable columns supported the lintel above the wide opening. Most halls at the site had a medial niche. Halls appear to have been constructed in two sizes at Zacpetén: one approximately 22 m long, including Strs. 606A and 615, and the other around 35 m long, including Strs. 606B-C and 767 (Figure 7-1 and 8-1). The reason for the difference is unknown and the artifact content of the two types was the

same. The size difference may reflect the presence of different social groups or perhaps political transformations through time.

On one side of most halls were two or more small masonry rectangles or tables. The purpose of the rectangles is uncertain, but they may parallel vaguely similar constructions in one side of the front rooms of smaller residences (Strs. 664, 732, and 758). The masonry tables in halls were not all constructed at the same time, but were added as buildings were reconstructed, apparently tied to renovation rituals and cyclical time. While they are very similar to stone rectangles in other ceremonial contexts such as Str. 607B, 631, 766B, and 720, no artifacts surrounded them defining how they were used. This point does not contradict that the features were used in rituals because open halls at Zacpetén appear to have been well cleaned. Furthermore, raised shrines face toward the rectangles, suggesting that they were the central features in the building.

The masonry tables in halls at Zacpetén are crudely uniform in size. There appear to be two masonry table types, one of which is smaller. The shorter edge of five of the six smaller features measured from 80 to 83 cm. This unit was also used on the columns in Str. 764, which measure between 82 and 84 cm on the shorter dimension. One standard measurement unit among modern Nahuatl speakers is called "*octácatl*" and is 80 cm and the proposed "Teotihuacan Measurement Unit" is 83 cm (Sugiyama 1993: 108). This unit was based upon the distance between fingertips of an extended arm and the heart. This measurement also seems to be present at Zacpetén.

The long ends of the tables were also standardized. A tree covered the end of one of the smaller tables, but in four of the remaining five, the long end is between 121 and 124 cm. The standardized sizes of the features suggest some sort of "perfect" ratio

similar to the golden mean. In fact, the ratio of the shorter to the longer length in the four typical tables is around 0.65, which differs only slightly from the European golden mean of 0.618. However, this ratio was reserved for the smaller masonry tables in open halls. The second type of masonry table is larger and is found in Str. 606A and 767 opposite of the raised shrines that face into these buildings. A larger table was not found in Str. 615.

Open halls tended to be very clean, but small quartz crystals were found in all three halls at Zacpetén. Crystals occurred in other buildings at Zacpetén, but they were always found in halls with relatively high frequencies. These artifacts are difficult to find, even with 1/8" screen. Hematite mirror fragments were also found in some halls. Str. 767 contained several spindle whorls. Such objects collected from archaeological contexts by contemporary Maya are used in divinatory practices (Brown 2000: 330). Two of the three halls at Zacpetén, Str. 615 and 767 contained phalli carved of limestone. Speleothem fragments in one hall may further link phalli with the buildings. The cleanliness of halls is also ritual activity as sweeping was a ritual performance in certain contexts. As mentioned, cleaning defines social space; therefore, in halls, it may have maintained lineage or other social boundaries.

Other Open Halls in Petén. Halls very similar to those of Zacpetén are found at Topoxté. The halls at Topoxté, Paxte Island, and Cante Island even have rectangular features along the mid-line matching those at Zacpetén. However, the Topoxté stone rectangles differ from those of Zacpetén as they cross the entire structure. Johnson (1985: 158) suggested these features were columns, but this does not appear to have been true at Zacpetén as the features only exist in the west half of the structures, do not form a line parallel with the

orientation of the structure, and were also gradually placed with each cycle of reconstruction.

The open hall, Str. 188, of Nixtun Chi'ch (Pugh 1996: 216-221) differs considerably from those of Zacpetén, but was very similar to those of Mayapán. It has round columns, a medial shrine, and a carved limestone altar turtle. While altar turtles are common at Late Postclassic sites, none were encountered at Zacpetén. Str. 188 is similar to the halls at Zacpetén because it had a C-shaped bench and was about the same size as the smaller halls at Zacpetén. It also contained quartz crystals, hematite mirror fragments, and a limestone phallus, like the halls of Zacpetén. Crystals were also found in Str. T99b of Tayasal (F. Castellano 1997: personal comm.). Upon the floor in front of the shrine of Str. 188 of Nixtun Chi'ch and in Str. T99b of Tayasal were numerous image and non-image censer sherds, which were not found in halls at Zacpetén. There are two halls in the Complex I of Tipú, Str. 4. One stands opposite of Str. 1, an oratorio and the other is at a right angle to Str. 2, a temple.

The "Super-K" structures at Seibal, interpreted as elite residences, look very similar to the open halls at Zacpetén and include a masonry rectangle in one side of the building. It is possible that the halls of Zacpetén "descended" from elite residences, as discussed below; however, it is also possible that the buildings at Seibal were mat houses.

Other Halls in Yucatán. There are numerous open halls at Mayapán of various sizes. These may have been the council halls of the various groups occupying the city. Alternatively, they might have been used for *onen* rituals. It has also been suggested that the buildings might have been elite "houses" (Gillespie 2000: 477), but artifact content within the buildings does not suggest domestic use. The form of the halls at Mayapán

differs slightly from those of Zacpetén and Topoxté. First, the buildings had round stone drum columns, but those of Zacpetén were perishable and those of Topoxté were square. Many of the columns at Mayapán were decorated with stucco human figures. Second, there seem to be no masonry rectangles in the halls at Mayapán. Third, most halls at Mayapán had either an interior shrine or altar, while those of Zacpetén had a niche or no medial feature. Within some of the shrines were seated human figures of stucco and altar turtles similar to the one encountered at Nixtun-Ch'ich'.

The halls at Mayapán were clean, but concentrated near the interior shrines were large quantities of human image and non-image censers, which clearly matches the distributions at Nixtun Ch'ich' and Tayasal, but not those at Zacpetén. It is unlikely the excavation methodology utilized at Mayapán would have permitted the recovery of small crystals on building floors, but the three crystals described at Mayapán were recovered from two caches in a colonnaded hall (Proskouriakoff 1962a: Figure 26; Shook and Irving 1955: 151-153). Unfortunately, none of the halls in temple assemblages at Mayapán were excavated; therefore, it is not known if they had activity patterns more comparable to those of Zacpetén.

Halls are also found at many other sites on the Yucatán peninsula, but a complete summary of these buildings will not be attempted here. Ek Balam has buildings that appear comparable to the halls of Zacpetén. The halls seem to lack medial features and masonry columns and one, Str. FT-21, has a masonry rectangle on its northern side (see Bey et al. 1997: Figure 6).

Halls were cleaned; however, among the Maya sweeping and cleaning was a ritual action that created social boundaries and was curative. In general, only tiny

artifacts such as crystals remain on their surface. At Zacpetén, crystals and hematite mirror fragments occur in higher numbers in halls than in other buildings. Both of these objects were used for divination. It is possible that members of the council were all the equivalent of the modern lineage heads in Momostenango, Guatemala in the Maya highlands, who are all “daykeepers”, trained in divination (Tedlock 1982: 47). Small sculpted phalli and speleothems were also often found in halls in Petén. These objects were likely associated with fertility. Many halls in Petén, outside the Kowoj area and in sites in Yucatán, have interior shrines or altars and associated with these features are numerous human image and non-image censer sherds and offering paraphernalia. The shrines in halls modified them so that part of their space was a god house; hence, governmental and deity rituals were not divided. However, at Zacpetén, administrative spaces/open halls were kept separate.

#### Northwest Ossuaries

In the northwest corner of Group A is an oval borrow pit with a flat bottom (Op. 1000) (Figure 7-1). Among the Maya, cenotes, cave, and holes in the ground, whether natural or artificial, were/are considered openings into the Underworld (Brady 1991: 6-7). Caves and cenotes were, therefore, appropriate places to deposit the dead. However, the individuals in Op. 1000 do not appear to have been simply buried, but rather, they were partially disarticulated prior to their placement in the pit. Furthermore, their placement in the pit was disorderly with arms and legs extended and bodies entangled.

The use of caves and cenotes to deposit the remains of sacrificial victims is well documented in the ethnohistorical record (Tozzer 1941: 119). Several Spaniards were sacrificed by the Petén Itza and their remains were placed in an island cave (Jones 1998:

303-304). The bodies of Spaniards sacrificed at Sacalum were beheaded, burned, and placed in caves (Jones 1989: 180). Apparently, living humans were thrown into the Sacred Cenote at Chich'en Itza (Landa 1941: 180).

While Op. 1000 was certainly a convenient place to deposit a mass grave of sacrificial victims, further evidence suggests that the deposition of the remains northwest of the temple (Str. 602) was not merely happenstance. The remains of at least two individuals were found in the northeast corner of Group C. Hence, human remains were found in the northwest corner of both Group A and Group C, but a more telling deposit was found at Topoxté.

Northwest of the temple, Str. C, on the western edge of the main plaza of Topoxté Island was a low platform, Str. L (Figure 5-11). The description of the contents of the fill of the Str. L could have just as easily described Op. 1000: "The fill of Structure L is of rocks and earth and mixed with the fill are bones from children and adults. Occasional limb bones are articulated, but the skeletons are not intact and the remains do not appear to be formalized burials. They may be the dismembered bodies of sacrificial victims" (Bullard 1970: 267). Once again, one can observe nearly identical activities occurring in corresponding spaces. The presence of the remains in the western part of the plaza is significant because the west is the direction of death and the Underworld. However, since disarticulated human remains are found in the northwest corner of the temple assemblages of Group A, Group C, and Topoxté Island, one might suggest this is a necessary part of the Kowoj temple assemblage, perhaps a dedicatory offering.

Archaeological excavations at Mayapán encountered a large deposit of disarticulated child and adult remains in the Cenote X-Coton (Smith 1953: 71), which lay

northwest of paired “temples” (actually shrines) that were not part of a temple assemblage. The cenote also contained a shrine and other ritual deposits. The location of the temples was likely influenced by the presence of the cenote as well as a nearby gate in the wall surrounding the city. The Cenote Ch’en Mul lies northwest of a temple assemblage temple, but it did not contain human remains. Three temples at Mayapán had deep shafts containing human and animal remains that may have been deposits of sacrificial victims in pseudo-caves (Shook 1953: 209; 1954a: 254-269).

The discussion above does not include all Late Postclassic Maya ossuaries, but it demonstrates a pattern. Deposits of disarticulated human remains are located northwest of the temple in the three excavated temple assemblages in Petén. Furthermore, parallel remains lay in a cenote northwest of a ceremonial structural at Mayapán. Op. 1000 may have been constructed to resemble a cenote or cave. The disordered placement bodies may reflect the entangled Underworld (following Klein 1982: 6-12). In Op. 1000 of Zacpetén and Cenote X-Coton at Mayapán, the individuals had been deposited into the mouth of the Underworld. In the other cases, placement to the extreme western edge of the platform, just as it descends, may also symbolize the Underworld.

#### Human Remains along Medial Axes

Op. 1001 in Group A of Zacpetén (Figure 7-1) contained several human mandibles with articulated cervical vertebrae, a skull, a bundle of long bones, several quartz crystals, and chert bifaces. This deposit lay directly upon the medial axis extending from the Str. 602. It also lay west of the relatively sparse deposit of human remains around Str. 607B and may have originated from this area. The deposit was associated with the second plaza construction, an event experienced by all buildings in

the group except Str. 614. It appears to have been a sacrifice and dismemberment event dedicating the second plaza. A parallel deposit was not found in Group C, but one could lie on the lower plaza to the west of the group, at the base of the nine steps of the western stairway. Nevertheless, human remains surrounded Str. 766B. The area on the west side of the medial axis was not investigated at Topoxté, Muralla de León, or Tipú.

The central building at Mayapán is the Castillo, which is a reconstruction of a building given the same name at Chich'en Itza. The medial axis of both buildings extends to the north, but that of the latter is skewed slightly to the east. Along the medial axis extending from the Castillo of Mayapán are a couple of deposits suggesting human sacrifice. The first is located just north of the dance platform directly north of the Castillo and contains the remains of two "partially disarticulated" children, who were deposited just before the construction of the first plaza surface (Adams 1953: 157); hence, it was dedicatory. The second deposit lies just north of Str. Q-79, a shrine, about 50 m north of the north stairway of the Castillo. This deposit was extremely shallow and contained the remains of five articulated adults and the scattered bones of two others. The remains appear stacked and the limbs of some are extended similar to those in Op. 1000. The most telling artifacts are three large chert knives, two found in the rib cages and one on the pelvis of three of the individuals. Also deposited with the remains were numerous scattered human image censer sherds (Adams 1953: 145-146).

At Chich'en Itza, the medial axis extending from the Castillo was redirected by a quadripartite platform toward a *sakbe* leading north to the Sacred Cenote. This cenote also contained human remains and was well known for sacrificial events. It was an entrance into the Underworld, but lay to the north instead of the west. Another

Underworld entrance was the ballcourt to the northwest of the Castillo. The essential layout of the central group seems to have been replicated in the Platform Ho' Che (Lincoln 1990: 406), which seems to have been a precursor to the temple assemblage.

The ends of medial axes of ceremonial groups opposite temples were ideal places to deposit human remains, especially if they ended in a location already linked to the Underworld such as a cenote or the west. At Zacpetén and Mayapán, deposits seem to indicate human sacrifice correlated with construction and cyclical time. Remains that were not in a cenote or borrow pit were placed directly below plazas, which are also thought to represent the primordial sea from which the ordered world emerged as well as at entrances into the supernatural world (Freidel 1993: 135-139). Temple plazas were common places to bury sacrificial victims (Landa 1941: 120).

#### Ritual Refuse Deposition

Refuse disposal is an important issue because only primary refuse can truly define the activity areas of a building. The Maya regarded ritual refuse as polluting and placed it in special locations (Tozzer 1941: 104). Even recent Maya groups realize the danger of discarded image censers (Redfield and Rojas 1934: 120). In Group A, major secondary refuse deposits were placed upon the fragments of Altar 1 and Stela 4 in an obvious effort to conceal the monuments. Deposits were also placed behind both halls in the group. In these four cases, the secondary refuse did not match the primary refuse found inside the superstructure of the buildings. They included large numbers of human image censer sherds, representing the Terminal Classic and Late Postclassic periods. Hence, not only were materials from the god house deposited behind other buildings, but potentially

dangerous image sherds encountered in the dismantling of Terminal Classic buildings were also treated in a similar manner.

An especially heavy refuse deposit was placed adjacent to the north side of Str. 602, the temple in Group A. This deposit included numerous censer and redware sherds, greenstone artifacts, and gold foil. It contained fragments of both Kulut Modeled and Patojo Modeled censers, which are only found in Strs. 605 and 602, respectively; hence, it is secondary refuse from two different buildings. A smaller deposit of censer and polychrome ceramic sherds was on the south side of the temple. The temple in Group C, Str. 764, had a heavy concentration of refuse on its south side as well that included conch shell fragments, stingray spines, and other items. The fear of pollution even prevented the removal of exotics.

### Summary

Each of the various buildings, plazas, and other spaces excavated at Zacpetén had specific meanings and was the location of specific activities. While one might think of each building as a unit, the space within it might be further divided into smaller units, each with its own significance and activities. While separate, the various activity areas are enclosed within walls and linked together as interrelated settings. Not only are they linked as settings, but they are usually socially linked. Activities within residences are conducted by families; those within temples, by priests; and so on. There is a high degree of consistency among buildings of the same type at Zacpetén. Each building type has similar layouts and activity patterns. The layouts and activity areas share commonalities with those of related sites and are indicative of two processes of repetition: habitual

action and ritual performance. While ceremonial groups are places dedicated to ritual, these performances are not independent from more mundane contexts.

### Ceremonial Buildings as Houses

Most buildings within ceremonial groups at Zacpetén were built similar to the front rooms of houses. This parallel is also suggested by the terms designating each structure type. The temple and oratorio were called *k'u naj* or 'god house' and the open halls, presumably, the Petén equivalent to Quiché *nim ja* or 'big houses' (Carmack 1981: 192; Rice 1988: 241) and/or *Itzam Naj*, 'sorcery house' (Schele and Mathews 1998: 40). Ancestral shrines were also likely considered to be houses, as among the Quiché, they are *warabal ja*, 'sleeping house' (Carmack 1981: 161). Even caves were paralleled with houses (Stone 1995: 35).

As mentioned, the front room was the social area of residences and at Zacpetén, most front rooms have an L-shaped bench (Figure 9-9). The front room of residences appears to have been replicated in the open halls, temples, and oratorios at Zacpetén. One of the oratorios in Group A, Str. 605, and both public temples at the site have L-shaped benches. In temples, humans interact with deities; hence, these were social areas matching the front room of houses. All of the open halls at Zacpetén and Str. 614, an oratorio, have C-shaped benches. C-shaped benches were not found in residences at Zacpetén, but many such benches at Mayapán were C-shaped. Oratorios and halls at Mayapán had C-shaped benches as well; therefore, it seems that these buildings were also paralleled with the front room of residences. Open halls were administration and social areas of a higher-level corporate group such as an *onen*, lineage, or elite "house." The benches of two of the three halls, both oratorios, and one temple had a medial niche

leading nowhere. This niche was essentially a vestigial remnant of the doorway leading from the front room to the backroom in the residences and may have led to the domestic space of the group ancestors and deities, which was not physically accessible by humans.

Ceremonial buildings are related in form and name to residences and, as will be seen below, the relationship was not forgotten because in Group 719, the front room of the residence took on the role of an open hall. This architectural reflexivity seems corollary to Turner's (1990: 16-18) dialectic between the "social drama and stage drama." Houses provided the model for the shape of ceremonial buildings, but the former could also have been modeled in the image of the latter.

### Temple Assemblages

Each of the ceremonial buildings, plazas, and the borrow pit at Zacpetén were locations of ritual performances and imbued with meaning. Furthermore, many, if not all, of the buildings had a special deposit that established its specific essence, heart-center, soul, or individual identity. Individual buildings were woven together into groups. Plaza edges distinguished groups from nearby buildings. Each group may have had a larger heart-center that both established it as a unique location and linked it to a chain of places and eventually to cosmogony. However, within these groups, buildings and activities were highly structured in complex relationships that mirrored society and the cosmos. In each temple assemblage, there were certain constant as well as variable relationships that brought about its distinctive form.

The plazas of Group A and Group C (Figure 7-1 and 8-1) were constructed on top of the two highest hills on the peninsula. From the top of these hills, one can both see and be seen from long distances. Such visual omnipresence is a common characteristic

of central places (Barthes 1979: 3). However, placement on a hill has significance that is more specific. Among the Maya, hills and mountains were sacred places. They were the homes of the gods, especially rain gods, and deified ancestors and, therefore, the point of interaction between humans and supernatural beings (Thompson 1970: 314). The landmarks themselves were also considered deities (Tedlock 1986: 128). The placement of the two assemblages on hills put them between the earth and water/sky and in the intermediate zone between the material world and the supernatural one. This space was clearly differentiated and sacred.

In each of the sacred zones, a temple rests in a medial position on the eastern side of the plaza. East is the primary direction for the Maya and is associated with life, heat, light, and the color red. Each of these buildings faces to the west; a dangerous direction associated with darkness, cold, death, and the color black. At Zacpetén, only god houses face to the west. The placement of the temple in the medial position of the eastern edge of the plaza marks it as the most important building. In Lacandon god houses, the most important god pots and rituals participants sit in the medial position (McGee 1990: 55-57). Among the Chamula, this position is the “hottest” (i.e., most powerful/sacred/balanced) and highest ranked (Gossen 1972: 127). Furthermore, the fact that Str. 602 and Str. 764 are both the tallest buildings in their respective groups underscores their centrality. They were hills upon hills and the second platform of the substructure adds another “hill.” Since the temples were the “hottest” places, they were closest to the heart-center of the cosmos and were, therefore, the most in tune with cosmic balance (following Fischer 1999: 483).

At the base of each of the god houses is a long, low platform that also held large effigy censers depicting deities. Since temples were off limits to many individuals, these were areas where everyone had access to deities; hence, they were less sacred extensions of the temples into the plaza. While Landa (1941: 128) did not specify why women were restricted from temples, it could be because they and younger men were considered to be cold (Gossen 1972: 122) and potentially polluting. As a lower and more western extension of the temple, the statue shrine was connected to its heart-center, but a little “cooler” and more accessible.

Temples were considered caves upon mountains (Stone 1995: 36). In both groups at Zacpetén, the central group at Topoxté, and the X-Coton group at Mayapán, dismembered human remains were deposited northwest of the temple; hence, there was a relationship between the temple and the remains. Str. 602 may have been symbolically connected with Op.1000, either as a structural parallel or reversal. It is questionable whether the temple or the deposit of disarticulated human remains was the central feature of the group. As mentioned, cosmogony was initiated by the sacrifice and dismemberment of the flood serpent and this event was recreated in ritual events. The dismembered remains in the northeast corner were likely a recreation of the event that allowed the “First-True-Mountain” (i.e., the temple) to emerge from the primordial sea. The sacrifice and dismemberment would have initially been the primary performance. However, after the dedication of the temple, it would have lessened in importance just as creator deities fade after the universe is cast in an acceptable form, thereby “ending the beginning” (following Sullivan 1988: 28 and 109). Hence, the temple was the center of the group after the initial sacrifice. This is evident by the lack of substantial ritual

deposits in Op. 1000 after the deposit of the human remains. The deposition of the remains in Op. 1001 at the second construction of Group A follows a similar pattern.

One might speculate the womb-like borrow pit (Op. 1000) was an objectification of western, dark “primordial female power,” which is temporarily dominant during cyclical terminations (following Gossen and Leventhal 1993: 196-200). The cave birth myth was present during the Terminal Classic period at Zacpetén as it was described on Altar 1. The winter solstice date of the monument corresponds with timing of rituals of “female primacy” among the Tzolzil that involve visits to caves (Gossen and Leventhal 1993: 210). Furthermore, when empty of soil, Op. 1000 would have held water that drained from the plaza (as was “discovered” during the excavations). Among the Huichol, such placid pools of water in caves and cenotes were female symbols (Heyden 1981: 27). While speculative, the interpretation of Op. 1000 as a temporary emergence of primordial female power suggests the borrow pit was initially a source of destructive and creative power.

The fire burned in Op. 1000 before the deposition of the remains may have been a metaphorical hearth or earth oven similar to that of the temple caches. The connection between caches and the borrow pit may have been explicit. Cache vessels in the area were often made as turtles with openings in their back (P. Rice 1986: Figure 8.5; Hermes and Noriega 1997: Figura 15), which resemble the stone altar turtles with small holes in their backs that also contained caches. Turtles were multivocal symbols representing the earth, water, and temporal cycles (Miller and Taube 1993: 174-175). The opening in the turtle’s carapace was the crack through which the maize god rose from the Underworld (Taube 1988: 167) and was, hence, a symbol of regeneration. It was also an entrance into

the Underworld, as were cenotes and caves. In Yucatan, turtles were specifically associated with cenotes and caves and giant turtles were said to have guarded openings into the underworld at the base of water-filled cenotes (Redfield and Rojas 1934: 207-208). The borrow pit held an enormous dedication cache/earth offering and may have identified Group A and the hill upon which it rests as an image of the “earth as a turtle.”

On the right side of the temple was an oratorio on a lower platform. Since its platform was lower and was not in the center of the plaza edge, it was likely of lower rank. In Lacandon god houses, “young unmarried men” sit to the north of older men, who sit in the center (McGee 1990: 56). In Chamula ritual space, the central eastern position is also the most powerful and decreases as one moves counter-clockwise to the north indicating senior/junior relationships (Gossen 1972: Figure 6). The closer one is to the central eastern position, the “hotter” and more senior they are. If architectural space follows the same principles, which it should since the system is a microcosm of cosmic order based upon solar movements (Gossen 1972: 129), then Str. 605 was the junior and Str. 602, the senior god house. The god pots within the junior god house were also much smaller depicting a single deity; hence, it was the house of a solitary less powerful or less active deity, perhaps, a deified ancestor. Whatever the case, this deity appears to have been essential to the Kowoj. Alternatively, this may have been the god house of a junior political figure. For example, groups in Petén were often divided into junior and senior rulers, the *B'atab'* and *Ajaw B'atab'*, respectively (Jones 1998: 92-93).

When part of a temple assemblage at Zacpetén, Topoxté, and Mayapán, open halls were always at a right angle to the temple and oratorio and generally faced north or south. Each hall had a large C-shaped bench upon which corporate group office holders

presumably sat. The buildings appear to have been constructed and positioned along one edge of the plaza so that those seated within had a good view of the plaza and temple. Furthermore, those in the plaza had a clear view of persons seated in the halls. Hence, persons sitting in halls were performing spectators. The halls at Zacpetén and Mayapán differ as the central features of the former are small masonry rectangles and of the latter, a medial feature. The placement of the open hall at a right angle to the temple combines administrative rituals with deity ritual. The officials and architectural correlates of the corporate group were placed in close proximity to the heart-center of the universe. Furthermore, the corporate group was ever present in ritual events occurring in the center.

At Zacpetén and Topoxté, (Figure 5-11 and 7-1) raised shrines in temple assemblages face into one side of the hall. At the former, the shrine always faces into the west side of the hall with small masonry rectangles; hence, there seems to be some sort of relationship between the shrines and the rectangles. Directly under one of the masonry rectangles in Str. 767 was a deep Late Postclassic burial. The other rectangles were not investigated with deep pits, so the degree to which this finding can be generalized is unknown. However, given that raised shrines contained burials at Mayapán, but not at Zacpetén, it is possible that burials of important group members had been moved from the shrines to the halls, but the shrines remained oriented toward the burials.

The temple assemblages of Group A and Group C had nearly identical activity areas. In both temples, large image censers were to the west and ritual offerings to the east; however, micro-patterns were observable within the larger patterns. The distribution in Str. 602 included three or four concentrations; each containing a pair of censers, but Str. 764 had two concentrations of smashed and mixed censers. Colored

beads in Str. 602 suggest the “awakening” of new gods pots and, therefore, the possibility of New Year rites. The mixed censers of Str. 764 suggest termination. As seen in the descriptions of Lacandon god houses, the basic layout of the houses remains the same, but minor differences occur when different rituals are performed. Furthermore, there must have been differences between practitioners and through time.

The minor disparity in ritual practices is supported by other differences in Group A and Group C. Group A has several greenstone/ serpentine axe heads, but none were found in Group C. Several pieces of gold foil and iron were found in the former, yet were not encountered in the latter. Group C contains a substantially higher number of net weights than were found in Group A. Differences were also found in painted ceramics between the two groups (Cecil 2000: personal comm.).

The difference in micro-patterns and frequencies are artifacts between of Group A and Group C may have resulted from the presence of two social factions at Zacpetén, possibly the Kowoj *onen*, if such groups existed at the site. The *onen* in Group A was centered upon the northern hill with its hall on the northern side of the plaza and that of Group C upon the southern hill with its hall on the southern side of the plaza.

### Group 719

Group 719 (Figure 9-9) was previously described as an elite domestic group, but it also seems to have been a temple assemblage. Public monumental space was combined with domestic space in this anomalous group. It was occupied quite late, in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, and was likely the final transformation of the temple assemblage.

The principal ceremonial building of the assemblage of Group 719 was the temple, Str. 721. Note that two activity spheres were present with the temple being the center of religious activity and the residence being the center of domestic activity. However, as in Group A and Group C, the temple provided access to forces that provided cosmic balance and center. As mentioned, the position, shape, and activity areas of Str. 721 parallel those of temples in the ceremonial groups. Furthermore, micro-patterns in activities in Str. 721 place it in close affinity with Str. 764.

In front of Str. 721 is a long low rectangular platform with small rectangles bordering it. This building is a statue shrine, but is more similar to those of Mayapán than the ceremonial groups of Zacpetén. At a right angle to the temple is Str. 719, the residence. There are strong parallels between the front room of houses and open halls. The front room of the residence is the hall in this assemblage. As mentioned, the bench contained soft limestone dividers forming 9 or 10 seats. Like the open halls, the front room in Str. 719 and the other residences at Zacpetén appear to have been swept, perhaps to define household space.

Str. 721, Str. 720, and Str. 719 certainly form the temple-altar-long structure layout that underlies the temple assemblage, but two buildings appear missing, the oratorio and raised shrine. While these two buildings were absent, their activity areas were not. In the interior shrine in the front room of Str. 719 was a small Kulut Modeled effigy censer depicting the exact same deity found in the medial niche of Str. 605, the oratorio of Group A. Hence, this interior shrine had the same primary activity area as the oratorio in Group A and was functionally an oratorio. Adjacent to the shrine is an altar that contained a pair of non-image censers---precisely the same content as the raised

shrines in both Group A and Group C. While the architecture varied slightly, Group 719 had the same activity areas as Group A and Group C. Furthermore, the facades of the temple and the front room of the residence were partially constructed of soft cut limestone similar to Group A and Group C. However, while Group 719 included the activity areas of a temple assemblage, it had a domestic area in its back room that was not found in the public assemblages. This was both an elite house and public ritual area.

As mentioned, Group 719 has micro-patterns in its temple matching those of Str. 764. Str. 719 also faces directly towards Group C. Group 719 was related to Group C. One major problem is that the date of Group 719 is much later than the construction of Group C. It is possible that image censers had been removed from deposits in Str. 764 and then placed in similar positions in Str. 721; however, this would not explain the fact that all of the ritual activity areas of the two groups match. It seems more likely that Kowoj faction that utilized Group C also later occupied Group 719.

### Petén Temple Assemblages

The layout of the ceremonial core of Topoxté is very similar to that of Zacpetén (Figure 5-11). While limited, the artifact distribution data available from Topoxté suggests Str. C had nearly identical ritual practices as the temples of Zacpetén. As has been argued, very specific ritual practices are associated with specific buildings at Zacpetén, and the same patterns may exist at Topoxté. Topoxté and Zacpetén also share the solitary deity described in Str. 605, though the specimen found at the former site lacks “bolts” in its mouth (see Bullard 1970: Fig. 21). These overt similarities lend support to the hypothesis that in their latest occupations, both Topoxté and Zacpetén were occupied by the same ethnic group, the Kowoj.

The similarity between Zacpetén and Topoxté suggests a Petén variant of the temple assemblage. In the Petén variant, the raised shrine is moved from the primary axis to a position opposing and facing into one side of the open hall. This pattern was also evident at Muralla de León, another probable Kowoj site. As mentioned, a similar layout is present in the temple assemblage of Group Q-58 at Mayapán (Figure 5-8a). This group also shares other characteristics including a larger temple superstructure, a plinth at the base of the stairway, and a similar ontology of the statue shrine. This layout appears to have been a late modification of the temple assemblage.

Not all of the temple assemblages in Petén are identical. The primary difference is in the medial features that lie in front of the temple. Those of the public groups at Zacpetén have a long statue shrine, with the long end parallel with the medial axis extending from the temple, and a small masonry altar at its end. The orientation of the statue shrines of the public groups differ from those of Group 719 and Mayapán, both of which have statue shrines perpendicular to the temple axis. The statue shrines at Topoxté are also perpendicular, but additional higher rectangular buildings, of unknown use, were placed between them and the temples. The statue shrine at Topoxté was distant from the temple; hence, temple access by the public may have been more restricted. The building between the temple and statue shrine on Topoxté Island may have had a stairway on two sides. If this stairway were aligned with the medial axis, this group is related to both Mayapán style temple assemblages and the previously defined Tulum-style assemblages (Figure 5-3). As mentioned, Group Q-58 at Mayapán is similarly composed.

A second difference is in the quality of construction. There is much less masonry at Zacpetén than at Topoxté and the masonry of the former is simply not as well fitted as

the latter. All of the buildings at Zacpetén, including the temples, had perishable roofs. At Topoxté, some structures had beam and mortar roofs like those of Mayapán and Tulum (Bullard 1970: 274-275). The main temple at Topoxté Island also stood 14 m tall (Bullard 1970: 255), which is much higher than the buildings at Zacpetén. The reason for the better construction is uncertain, but Topoxté might have been occupied earlier and it was likely a more important civic- religious center than Zacpetén.

While the public temple assemblages at Zacpetén and the main group of Topoxté are quite similar to each other, other assemblages in Petén differ from these groups. The temple assemblage on Paxte Island lacks a raised shrine facing into the hall and the assemblage at Muralla de León seems to be missing an oratorio. In Group C of Ixlú, an oratorio does not rest to the right of the temple and a raised shrine does not appear to face into the hall. Furthermore, no human image censers were found in its “temple.” While some sites deviate slightly from the Petén temple assemblage archetype, it clear that the pattern is spatially restricted to the east of Lake Petén Itza in Kowoj territory.

Complex I of Tipú (Figure 5-12b) shares many similarities with Group A of Zacpetén. It has a temple with a lower building to its right, possibly an oratorio. A building on the south side of the plaza rests at a right angle to the temple and might be a small open hall. The group has a building resembling the statue shrines of Zacpetén lying in front of the oratorio rather than the temple. A rectangular shrine rests in front of the temple. A possible small *sakbe* cuts across the group and on the other side of this structure is an open hall facing east, which matches the layout at Zacpetén. Excavation in the temple revealed painted ceramics (Cecil 2000: personal comm.) and human image and non-image censers (Rice 1984; Foor 1994: 65) of the same types present at Zacpetén.

Overall, it seems very similar to Group A at Zacpetén; however, the temple form and the rectangular shrine in front of the temple are more similar to the central group of Topoxté.

### Mayapán and Yucatán

The civic-ceremonial groups at Zacpetén and Topoxté share strong affinities with those of Mayapán (Figure 5-7 and 5-8a). The central groups at each site have a temple, oratorio, statue shrine, raised shrine, and open hall. Even more convincing is the correspondence between Mayapán and Petén in the organization of these buildings into assemblages. The statue shrine always rests in front of the temple, the oratorio to the right of the temple, and the hall parallel with the medial axis extending from the temple. These three characteristics are invariable in public ceremonial groups at the three sites. However, while temples in Petén assemblages always faced west, those at Mayapán vary. The Petén sites follow Colonial descriptions that only ceremonial buildings faced west (Tozzer 1941: 86). It seems likely that the temples in Petén were placed to take advantage of eastern “heat.” The four assemblages in the center of Mayapán were part of a larger ritual system associated with the Castillo and their directionality may indicate oppositions or other symbolic differentiation within the system.

In most assemblages at Mayapán, the raised shrine rests directly in front of and faces directly into the temple, but in Group Q-58 and Petén assemblages, it was moved away from the medial axis and aligned with central features in the open hall. In the anomalous Itzmal Ch'en Group, the problem seems nullified, as the raised shrine is circular facing four directions toward the temple, one side of the hall, oratorio, and a superfluous hall.

Another difference between Mayapán and Zacpetén is that god pots are described for all buildings in the assemblage rather than just the temple and statue shrine. Deities reportedly played a part in all buildings in Mayapán temple assemblages, but at Zacpetén, they were restricted to the temple and its extension. However, Mayapán excavation reports often did not differentiate between materials found within the buildings and at the base of the platform. Excavations at Zacpetén have revealed that ritual refuse deposits adjacent to platforms do not necessarily match the content within the superstructure. Hence, the inclusion of materials from these areas nullified their ability to define the artifact assemblages of specific buildings because ritual refuse concentrations are generalized secondary deposits from the whole group. Furthermore, the superstructures of oratorios and open halls in temple assemblages at Mayapán were not excavated. Halls and oratorios in and outside temple assemblages at Mayapán might have varied significantly. Hence, it is possible that the excavations at Mayapán did not adequately define activities within raised shrines, halls, and oratorios of temple assemblages.

If the characterizations are accurate and multiple deities played a part in all administrative and ancestral rites at Mayapán, then their use at Zacpetén was certainly more restricted and fission seems to have occurred between god pot and council rituals. Thus, a greater degree of secularization may be evident at the latter site. Further evidence is seen in the transformation in the position of raised shrines from focusing on temples to focusing on open halls. The appropriation of ancestors by the ruling council seems solidified in architectural metaphor.

The central assemblage at Tulum also shares many similarities with Zacpetén and other sites in Petén. The bench in the central temple makes it more comparable to the

temples in Petén than most at Mayapán. Directly across the plaza from the colonnaded hall is a raised shrine facing into one side of the hall. Conversely, the assemblage at Tulum has a platform with two stairways directly in front of the temple. Assemblages in Petén do not have such structures with the possible exception of the central group at Topoxté, but Group Q-58 at Mayapán has a similar building. The group at Tulum has numerous raised shrines, which are much less common in Petén and temple assemblages at Mayapán. Furthermore, a statue shrine is not present at Tulum.

#### “Superfluous” Buildings

In almost all temple assemblages, “extra” contemporaneous buildings are placed within groups that do not form the essential elements of the assemblage. In some cases, they are small attached shrines, but in others, they are large buildings that must have had a substantial effect on the places as stages for ritual events. They also suggest ritual practices that were bonded to those housed by the temple assemblage. At Mayapán, superfluous buildings in all temple assemblages gave each group a slightly different composition. Such innovations are obvious sources of ritual transformation.

In Group A at Zacpetén, several important buildings rest on the west side of the plaza (Figure 7-1). First, Str. 603, the *sakbe* cuts the plaza in half. This north/ south road may represent the road to the Underworld and/ or the world-tree, the instrument of cosmic differentiation. The road appears to have been swept, hence there is further evidence of boundary creation. The boundary of interest seems to be between the east and west sides of the plaza. Numerous human remains were deposited west of the *sakbe* in Op. 1000 and 1001. In the southwest corner was an open hall. Just as dual organizations in the highlands are event in the partition of the plaza, the plaza of Group A

has been divided in half, each associated with a specific open hall. A similar pattern may exist at Tipú, but the *sakbe* runs diagonally. The superfluous hall in Group A may belong to the same group that occupied Group C. It is possible that the two open halls in Group A represented the *onen* of the Kowoj “moiety.” One controlled the temple assemblage in Group A and the other the assemblage in Group C.

#### Double-Hall Temple Assemblages

One common characteristic not defined in the temple assemblage is the presence of two open halls in some assemblages. This pattern is seen in Group Q-143 and the Itzmal Ch'en Group at Mayapán, Group A of Zacpetén, Complex I of Tipú, the central groups on Paxte Island and Cante Island, and possibly Ixlú. Of the seven mentioned temple assemblages with two halls, the first three have cenotes or borrow pits 15 to 80° clockwise (usually northwest) of the temple's medial axis. In the one group, the Itzmal Ch'en Group, in which the temple faces to the south rather than the west, the cenote lies due west of the oratorio. Group Q-143 at Mayapán is the eastern of the four temple assemblages in the ceremonial core of the site. Four cardinal guardians are mentioned at the fall of Mayapán and the eastern guardian is named Kowoj (Edmonson 1986: 81). The Itzmal Ch'en Group is found in the far eastern part of the city. In addition, while not a temple assemblage, the X-Coton Group has a cenote that held human remains to the northwest of a double shrine. Furthermore, the Cenote Ch'en Mul, which lies to the northwest of Str. Q-143, has an adjacent oratorio similar to Str. 614 at Zacpetén. Since these groups correspond with the double-hall with associated pit layout found in many Petén Kowoj sites, it is possible that the Itzmal Ch'en and Group Q-143 were temple assemblages of the Kowoj at Mayapán.

In addition to two oratorios and halls and a borrow pit, another feature double hall temples assemblages often share is a bench inside the temple. Most temples at Mayapán, including that of Group Q-143 have no benches. However, the temples of the Itzmal Ch'en Group, Tipú, and all excavated Petén assemblages have benches. A bench is also present in the central temple at Tulum. The addition of a masonry bench was a late alteration of temple assemblage temples and may further define the Kowoj.

Double halls outside of temple assemblages are common with examples at Seibal, Nixtun-Ch'ich', and Mayapán. Whether open halls are architectural correlates of lineage, "house", or other corporate administration, architectural groups with two halls may indicate some sort of dual political organization such as *ajk'in/ ajaw*, senior/ junior *b'atab'* pairings, and social dualism of *onen*. Another possibility is that they are an architectural manifestation of the dual descent of the ruling elite.

As mentioned, Complex I of Tipú is an anomalous temple assemblage bearing similarity to both Topoxté and Zacpetén. Despite this architectural ambiguity, correspondence between the painted ceramics of Tipú with those of Zacpetén and Topoxté suggests all were Kowoj sites (Cecil 2000: personal comm.). Tipú lies outside the reconstructed 17th century Kowoj region; however, the site was conquered and missionized in A.D. 1544; therefore, Kowoj territory likely constricted as the Spaniards expanded into what is now Belize. The key to Complex I is its two open halls, which suggest social duality, just as they did at Zacpetén.

The duality of the halls in Complex I extends beyond lineage, "house" or *onen* into a duality of function. Str. 4 stands opposite of an oratorio with a shrine lying between the two buildings forming a basic ceremonial group. Str. 3 rests at a right angle

to a temple and a rectangular shrine rests in front of the temple forming a temple assemblage. The oratorio of the basic ceremonial group is also the oratorio of the temple assemblage. Hence, one hall is part of a temple assemblage and the other part of a basic ceremonial group and these two groups are fused together through the shared oratorio. The combination of a basic ceremonial group with a temple assemblage is seen in Group A of Zacpetén, Paxte Island, and Cante Island in Petén and Group Q-143 and the Itzmal Ch'en Group at Mayapán. Hence the grouping does not appear to have been exceptional, but may define the Kowoj. This duality could have resulted from senior/ junior *b'atab'* pairings, the *ajk'in/ahaw* diarchy, or social dualism of fictive kin-based groups such as *onen*.

As mentioned, the differences between assemblages at Zacpetén and Topoxté is found in the features lying in front of the temple, the former has a long low rectangular structure with a masonry rectangle at its end and the latter has a shrine and a statue shrine. The features at Zacpetén match those in front of the oratorio, Str. 1, at Tipú. While only one shrine has been discerned in front of the temple at Tipú, the layout of the temple is similar to that of Topoxté. The hall in the basic ceremonial group is associated with Zacpetén style features and the hall in the temple assemblage with Topoxté style features. A high degree of consistency was observed within assemblages at Topoxté and Zacpetén, but the two differed slightly from one another. Interestingly enough, features of the two seem combined in Complex I of Tipú. Complex I at Tipú exhibits corresponding social and functional duality possibly associated with the Zacpetén and Topoxté Kowoj factions. In this case, the duality suggests senior/ junior *B'atab'* pairings because two generally distinct groups are united. The two factions likely used Tipú as a

trading station as it was a point of access to the ocean via the Macal River. Any Zacpetén/Topoxté joint venture at Tipú would have ended in AD 1544 with its conquest.

### Architectural Grammar

All buildings are slightly different and variation is evident in the architecture of the temple assemblages at Zacpetén, Topoxté, Mayapán, and so on. Nevertheless, clear rules underlie the assemblages. First, regardless of its position, the temple is the center and foundation of the group. At Mayapán, the positions of all of the other buildings are dependent upon the location of the temple (Figure 5-7). The statue shrine is centered upon and perpendicular to its axis, the raised shrine centered upon and facing into it and the oratorio to its right. The open hall is perpendicular to the medial axis extending from the temple. Furthermore, upon this axis were often deposits of human remains. As seen in the transformations of the Tulum-style and Petén temple assemblages, the position of the raised shrine is inconsistent between sites, but is very consistent within specific sites.

Raised shrines are usually paired with a house, open hall, or temple. When paired with either of the latter two, those at Mayapán are centered upon the central niche, altar, or interior shrine of the building it faces. The central features within halls appear to be modifiers that slightly change the meaning of parts of the building. For example, at Nixtun-Ch'ich' and Mayapán, the presence of interior shrines within halls transformed adjacent space into a god house. The raised shrines are directed toward these central features. While the central feature is often medially located, the centering of the shrine is not simply a matter of symmetry because when the feature is off center, the shrine still lies opposite, and facing into, it. When more than one shrine rests in front of a building, the "extra" building usually faced the central feature at an angle. Their position and

directionality is dependent upon the position and internal features of central buildings such as temples, residences, and halls. Of course, the central buildings, in turn, may be dependent upon another building. Furthermore, on occasion shrines stand independently, sometimes with a smaller shrine centered upon and facing into them. In most temple assemblages at Mayapán, the raised shrine is focused upon the temple.

In both Petén and Tulum temple assemblages, raised shrines were removed from the medial axis of the group. In the Tulum assemblages (Figure 5-3), the raised shrines appear freed from dependence upon other buildings. The only apparent rule at most sites is that they face into the plaza. However, at Tulum itself, Group Q-58 at Mayapán and in most Petén assemblages, the focus of one raised shrine was redirected from the temple to the open hall (Figure 5-11a, 7-1, and 8-1). Instead of facing into a medial feature, the raised shrines at Zacpetén face the small masonry features in the west side of the hall. These features are modifiers of some sort that transform the meaning space in the west side of the hall and make it the focus of raised shrine. While focused upon one side of the hall, the raised shrine at Tulum has no apparent target and that of Group Q-58 at Mayapán is centered upon and faces the medial niche of the hall.

The transformation in the grammar of temple assemblages must have had social implications because each building was associated with specific social statuses: the temples with deities and elite ritual practitioners; the oratorios with a specific deity; statue shrines with deities and public worship; open halls with corporate groups and group leaders; and raised shrines with ancestors. If the raised shrines were used for ancestor worship, then ancestors initially appear to have been closely tied to deities, but in Petén, they became associated with or appropriated by the corporate group. If the

group in question were a lineage, then an increase in the power of specific lineages may be evident as they venerated their ancestors in central shrines. In Tulum assemblages, on the other hand, ancestors of various groups were incorporated in the center. The emphasis on one open hall in each Petén temple assemblage may indicate an objectification of the group's association with the temple assemblage and, hence, Mayapán. This is supported by the lack of ancestors (i.e., burials) in Str. 765. It seems likely that the ancestral shrine was a vestigial representation; the ancestors were somewhere else---Mayapán. Alternatively, Str. 601, the raised shrine in Group A, is resting upon what appears to be a Terminal Classic period shrine, though this function cannot be demonstrated, as it was gutted by looters. One might suggest that the earlier construction was simply "used" as a platform core; however, Str. 601, in unusually tall for a raised shrine and covering its internal core would have required much more work than did the construction of Str. 765. Hence, another possibility is later people appropriated an earlier shrine and in this scenario, existing human remains would have been adopted or perhaps revitalized as ancestors. This point is further substantiated by the placement of a Terminal Classic stela in its lower terrace and a Terminal Classic altar on the opposite side of the plaza in the platform of Str. 606.

A second important point in the architectural grammar at Zacpetén is the high degree of parallel between Group A and Group C. These groups not only looked the same, but also had the same activity areas and histories. The mimicry between Group A and Group C contrasts with the variation in groups at Mayapán. It would appear that at Zacpetén, unity was celebrated, but at Mayapán differentiation was juxtaposed with unity; thereby revealing the plurality of its society. Social divisions likely existed at

Zacpetén, but they were much weaker than at Mayapán because ritual practices were overtly harmonized.

While the temple assemblages in Petén differ slightly from many at Mayapán, they are similar to those in Group Q-58 at Mayapán. Since the same variation occurs at Tulum, it is likely a late transformation of the temple assemblage. Differences can arise from sources other than disparity in ritual knowledge among sub-groups. While they are repetitive, rituals change through time in response to social and ideological shifts and the places of ritual performance must likewise change. When the Kowoj moved from Mayapán into Petén, they arrived in a different system of social alliance, and conflict. Despite the minor differences, the temple assemblages were clearly distinct from other ceremonial groups in Petén. They would have connected the Kowoj with the exalted ritual knowledge of Mayapán and served as monuments of their migration from the city.

The double hall temple assemblage seems to be the most specific indicator of the Kowoj. The assemblages in Group A of Zacpetén, Itzmal Ch'en and Group Q-143 of Mayapán, and Complex I of Tipú all seem to combine a temple assemblage with a basic ceremonial group. The combination of two oft discrete ritual groups suggests a combination of two distinct ritual settings into one. Hence, the fusion of *ajaw* (administrative focus) and *ajk'in* (deity focus) seems a strong possibility. Not all temple assemblages in Petén had double hall with Group C at Zacpetén and the central group at Topoxté being notable exceptions.

Another transformation in the layout of temple assemblages is found at Cante Island and Las Pinturas complex at Coba, where the oratorio has been moved from its position to the right of the temple to a position directly in front of, yet still facing in the

same direction as, the temple. Stela (Late Classic to Postclassic period) are found in or near both oratorios (Bullard 1970: 268-271; Folan 1983: 73-75). The reason for the shift in the position of oratorios is uncertain, but in the case of Coba, there is a definite emphasis on the medial axis, as indicated by 13 shrines resting in front of the temple. It seems doubtful that Coba and Cante Island would be any more socially connected than other temple assemblages, yet the presence of stela near each building suggest similarity in activities that is not found elsewhere.

### Summary

All ritual buildings of the same category at Zacpetén shared similar forms and activity areas. The temple superstructures of Zacpetén differed from those of Topoxté in form, but their activity areas matched. Topoxté likely predated Zacpetén as the former has some buildings with beam and mortar ceilings and construction appears to end around A.D. 1450 (Hermes and Acevedo 1991: 272). The contents of temples of Mayapán and Tipú also matched those of Zacpetén. The open halls in the Kowoj area of Petén differ from those in other ethnic provinces in Petén and at Mayapán because they lacked medial shrines and concentrations of god pots. The halls at Zacpetén also differed because they had masonry rectangles in one side of the building---the side fully open to the plaza, thereby allowing the “tables” to be “faced” by a raised shrine.

The temple assemblages in Group A and Group C of Zacpetén were almost duplicates of one another in composition and activity. Group 719 was a late construction built as both an elite domestic group and a temple assemblage with ties to Group C. The assemblages at Zacpetén were nearly identical to those of Topoxté with the exception of variation in small buildings in front of the temples. The assemblages in Petén differ

slightly from most at Mayapán because the raised shrines were shifted out of the medial axis to one side of the group and face perpendicular to the axis toward masonry rectangles in the open hall. This transformation in architectural may reflect a strengthening of the link between the corporate group and group ancestors. The lack of the central raised shrine allowed the statue shrines at Zacpetén to be rotated parallel with the medial axis extending from the temple.

Temple assemblages in Petén define the location of the Late Postclassic to Contact period Kowoj and differentiate them from the Itza, who had no such assemblages. These ceremonial groups provide a clear connection between Kowoj sites, including Zacpetén, Topoxté, Tipú, and Muralla de León, with Mayapán, thereby providing archaeological evidence corroborating the Kowoj myth of ethnic origin. Since the construction of temples by migrants from Mayapán was well known, Mayapán-style temple assemblages seem to be both ritual assemblages and monuments commemorating Mayapán ancestry. In addition to ancestry and social unity, the assemblages also communicated Kowoj cosmogony and cosmology.

## CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSIONS

Archival data describe that the Itza and Kowoj dominated the political geography of 17th century Petén, Guatemala. As part of their political mythopractices, each group emphasized a specific homeland from which they had migrated: the Itza tied themselves to Chich'en Itza and the Kowoj claimed Mayapán as their place of origin. Ethnohistoric and glyphic data place the Kowoj at Mayapán and the Itza and their ruling family, Kan Ek', at Chich'en Itza. Furthermore, they describe Itza migrations to a place called Chak'anputun. The Spaniards noted that the Kowoj occupied the northeastern portion of the Petén lakes region, but this historical information remained unverified by archaeological data until the present project.

The Itza informed the Spaniards that Kowoj settlements were fortified and had “castillos,” which generally indicated temples. The present and previous projects have indicated that not only are sites in the northeastern part of the Petén lakes region fortified, but they also have ceremonial groups with temples constructed similarly to those of Mayapán. Zacpetén, which lies in the proposed Kowoj region, is fortified, has Mayapán-style temple assemblages, and was the location of the excavations providing the data for the present dissertation. It is suggested that temple assemblages of Zacpetén were architectural configurations defining the boundaries of Kowoj territory in Petén and tying the group to Mayapán. These ceremonial groups were centers exhibiting stereotypical characteristics of public ritual. They were public ritual centers that illustrated the nature

of the universe and human responsibility in its continuity, contained Kowoj collective memories, and defined their political organization. Temple assemblages were consciously repeated patterns, both structuring and reflecting the world of the Late Postclassic to Contact-period Kowoj.

### Ritual Performance at Zacpetén

Ritual performances have been characterized as being formal, traditional, ordered, and repetitive, and taking place in special spatiotemporal contexts different from those of everyday life. Furthermore, in many cultures the “special spatiotemporal contexts” are sacred or boundary states. All of these special qualities of ritual are evident at Zacpetén and are concentrated in the two civic-ceremonial architectural groups.

Ritual performances likely occurred in almost every context at Zacpetén, including residences, kitchen houses, milpas, the lakeshore, fortifications, and so on. This omnipresence of ritual would seem to discount the notion that it occurs in special spatiotemporal contexts. The problem here is that there is a huge range of phenomena classified under the term “ritual” and, as a result, the term is so vague as to be nearly all-inclusive. The solution to the problem is to begin with specific, observable, and testable qualities rather than abstract terms. Hence, one might begin by posing whether there are special spatiotemporal contexts with associated formal, traditional, ordered, and repetitive public performances at Zacpetén. Such differentiated contexts do in fact exist at the site. Upon each of the two highest hills at Zacpetén are ceremonial groups and there are absolutely no residential areas within these groups. Groups 719 and 629 are the only groups incorporating architecture similar to that of the ceremonial groups. Group 719

was excavated and, as described above, found to contain a residential ceremonial group constructed much later than, and as a copy of, the other two temple assemblages.

Temple assemblages at Zacpetén were spatially and architecturally differentiated from residential areas. Many architectural elements including open halls and multi-terraced pyramidal platforms were limited to Group A and Group C. Open halls, which appear to mimic domestic structures overtly, lack the back room or domestic area. With the exception of Group 719, the use of Classic-period cut stone in Late Postclassic facades was encountered only in the ceremonial groups. Temples and their assemblages and large human effigy censers were found in situ only in these two groups or their successors. The temple assemblages in Group A and Group C were constructed, and then later reconstructed once. Given that the two groups were identical in form and activities, it is likely that they were built and rebuilt during community renewal rites; hence, their construction and essential natures were embedded in a special temporal niche.

Descriptions of Colonial Yucatecan ritual practices suggest a high degree of formality, while those of more recent Lacandon god houses are less formal. In the former, formality is indicated by the use of codified texts, strict punishment for errors in procedure, poetic speech, and others. Among the Lacandon, a low degree of formality was until recently indicated by special costumes and strict taboos. Behaviors in Zacpetén temple assemblages appear to have been very formal. The range of variation of in situ artifact types is far more restricted in Group A and Group C than in domestic groups. Evidence of activities other than those involved in making offerings, communicating with deities, divination, activation, termination, and ensouling are scarce. Formality is also evident in the traditionalism of the temple assemblages.

Temple assemblages at Zacpetén were built with the same buildings and basic layout as those of Mayapán; hence, their construction was traditional. Like traditionalism in many cultural groups (Bell 1997: 145), that of Zacpetén evoked legitimacy through precisely repeating forms of the past. Since the Kowoj claimed to have migrated from Mayapán, the appeal to tradition through these ritual places was critical. Mimicking the ritual places of the city created a symbolic tie between Zacpetén and Mayapán and implied the continuity of its esteemed ritual knowledge. As mentioned in Chapter 5, temple assemblages likely descended from earlier forms, such as the Triadic Temple Arrangement, E-Group, Twin Pyramid Complex, and Plaza Plan 2, extending back at least 1000 years; therefore, they were durable symbols of tradition. Furthermore, the use of Classic period cut stone and monuments in facades was an appeal to tradition as they dressed the faces of the buildings in the robes of the past. This practice was intentional as it was also encountered at Mayapán (Proskouriakoff 1962: 95).

Colonial ritual practices were highly ordered according to specific rules as they followed strict formats. Nevertheless, at times within the structured performances, some variation was allowed. For example, commemorations and predictions varied from rite to rite. It is nearly impossible to recreate the temporal order of acts in ritual performances at Zacpetén, but horizontal patterning demonstrates that particular activities occurred in specific buildings. Hence, activities within temple assemblages were definitely spatially ordered. Since buildings were combined into architectural groups containing interrelated ritual settings, it is likely that most rituals would have involved all of the buildings; therefore, procedures were spatially divided and ordered by the various divisions in ritual space. The major buildings in the assemblages represented distinct cultural categories:

ancestors, the ruling council, and gods. It is likely that their involvement in most large-scale ritual performances would involve discrete, temporally ordered acts.

The temple assemblages exhibit repetitive behavior in their construction and use. The activity areas in the two ceremonial groups are the same and Group 719, in turn, replicates them. In fact, not only do the latest uses of the groups correlate, but also early constructions directly beneath them exhibit very similar activity patterns. Furthermore, ritual practices in temples at Zacpetén match those in the main temple at Topoxté and those among the modern Lacandon Maya. A high degree of repetitiveness exists in the construction and use of temple assemblages. Nevertheless, the repetition was not involuntary and slight variations are evident.

The concept referred to as “the sacred” is variously defined, but most if not all definitions of this term are met in Group A and Group C. First, the two groups are sacred because they are “set apart” in a spatiotemporal contexts different from everyday life. Second, they are more closely related to deities as is evident by the presence of god houses, Strs. 602, 605, 764, and 1002. Third, they are valued by the society as a major foundation of identity formation, as discussed in detail below. Fourth, they are tied to creation events, as discussed below. The part of the definition of “sacred” that is of particular interest to the present work is the danger and power derived from intermediary or boundary states. The two ceremonial groups were placed where discrete categories of being intermingle, including both social and cosmic categories. First of all, they were located on hills between the earth and sky. Second, they were points of interaction with the Underworld and heavens. Third, two corporate groups interact in Group A.

The various residential groups surrounding Group A and Group C represent independent units of social being (i.e., households). In most Maya groups, the integrity of household solidarity is maintained by various practices including ritual sweeping (Hanks 1990: 337-364), strict visitation rites (Boremanse 1998: 18), elaborate dedication ceremonies (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934: 146-147), and domestic symbols (Restall 1997: 153-154). As central public spaces, the two ceremonial groups break down and incorporate smaller social divisions into the whole. They are points of unity for all households, lineages, and other groups that they center.

In addition to bridging social boundaries, the two centers negotiate cosmic boundaries, specifically those between the earth (humans) and sky (deities); the earth (humans) and Underworld (deities); and humans and earth deities. Their placement upon hills distinguished the groups, as these natural features were sacred points of contact between the earth and sky. Hills were also considered to be living beings (Tedlock 1986: 128). The temple substructures are hills or mountains writ small, thereby duplicating and emphasizing the message: these are elevated places standing between the material and celestial planes. Upon the human-constructed hills are god houses containing an assortment of celestial deities and on a lower platform of the oratorio is the Underworld deity. The gods were present in the form of god pots. The fact that parts, especially faces, of these vessels were removed and cached illuminates their power and danger.

Zacpetén has special spatiotemporal contexts in which activities are formal, traditional, ordered, repetitive, and sacred. Hence, the activities within these groups meet the traditional criteria for the term "ritual." Rituals occurred outside these groups, but they were clearly not performed in the same manner as those inside the ceremonial area.

Furthermore, the “ritual density,” the frequency of ritual activities to everyday activities (following Bell 1997: 173), is clearly much higher in the ceremonial groups as there is no evidence of domestic production, while outside the ceremonial groups, activities that do not involve direct interaction with other cosmic planes are emphasized.

Another quality of ritual of particular interest in the present work is its communicative properties. In particular, I am interested in how performances in these special contexts allowed communities to communicate information--- especially social boundaries---about themselves to themselves and others.

### Talking about Themselves

Many societies recognize the significance of creation and social origin by representing them in their “exemplary centers,” models of cosmic and political order, which are manifest through various means including architecture and ritual performances (Wheatley 1971: 436-451; Geertz 1980: 13). Exemplary centers are media of social consciousness, memory, and archetypes. The two ceremonial groups at Zacpetén are exemplary centers of the Kowoj universe and political order. They contain information about creation, the form of the cosmos, and social origins and divisions.

### Temple Assemblages and Cosmology

The term *tzuk*, ‘partition’ refers to the primordial division of the universe (Freidel et al. 1993: 140) as well as markers defining the boundaries of *milpa*. The five stones of each *tzuk* marker are, conceptually, initially derived from the central three stones of the hearth (Hanks 1990: 357). Among many Yucatecan groups, paths encircling milpas are boundaries and the cleaning of these paths helps maintain the boundaries and protect that

which lies inside. The *sakbe*, Str. 603, in Group A differs from this model, as in this case, a path runs down the center of the group dividing it in half. Nevertheless, the *sakbe* does appear to have been a boundary as it was cleaned and one open hall or *onen*/lineage/“house” administration center lies on each side of the divide.

The key to the symbolism of Group A may be Str. 603. This *sakbe* was too small to have served simply as a road from one place to another. While ritual processions may have moved across it, it was more of simulacrum of a road, but not just any road---rather the cosmic *sakbe*. A similar feature was found at Uxmal (Schele and Mathews 1998: 285-286). The cosmic *sakbe*, which is both the road into the Underworld and the world tree, is believed to have been the Milky Way observed extending north to south across the night sky (Freidel et al. 1993: 76), just as Str. 603 extends north to south. This road/ tree was not just a connection between the cosmic planes, but the instrument of their division as is evident in the name of the world tree, *wakaj-chan* or ‘raised-up sky’ (Freidel et al. 1993: 542). Hence, the world-tree both connected and divided the sky, earth, and Underworld, just as it differentiated the rest of creation. The plaza at Tayasal was described as containing a stone column representing the world tree (Thompson 1977: 27) and Str. 603 could have been a variant on this theme. No road or column was found in Group C at Zacpetén, but one might speculate that the circular shrine, Fea. 767A-3, could have supported a wooden pole or small tree, as its top was not plastered.

Dirt was swept to the west of the *sakbe*, which was a place of death and the Underworld. Op. 1000 holds a mass grave of numerous dismembered humans; Op. 1001 contained caches of human mandibles and other body parts; and cremated remains may lie to the north of Str. 615. The remains in Ops. 1000 and 1001 appear to have been the