

## Chapter VI

### THE HAN RIVER PROJECT

Isolating a cluster of Chulmun Period sites and studying it from as many points of view and with as many kinds of data as possible seemed to be the most efficient way to begin analyzing the subsistence base of the Chulmun Period. A small cluster of sites exists on the middle portion of the Han River, with other known sites farther upriver and on the coast and nearby islands. As a fairly well-known area near Seoul, it was chosen because it provides more environmental and archaeological data than other similar clusters at present.

The larger region chosen for spot surveys is shown in Figure 12 with Chulmun period sites located and the surveyed areas shaded. Figure 13 shows the Middle Han region, with the area of intensive survey similarly marked.

Surveys were conducted in the fall, during the winter whenever snow conditions permitted, and in the early spring, concluding just as spring planting began. Vegetation, both cultivated plants and weeds, covers the ground surface in summer, making summer surveying unrewarding. The best time to survey proved to be late winter and early spring when the ground was bare of ice, snow and vegetation, but before flooding of the rice paddies began.

Although this region had been surveyed previously (Chase 1964), that survey was described as "limited." As the most complete series possible was desired, it was decided that the area designated for intensive survey, the middle Han basin, should be carefully searched for other sites. In spite of thorough search in several seasons, no previously unknown Chulmun Period sites were found.

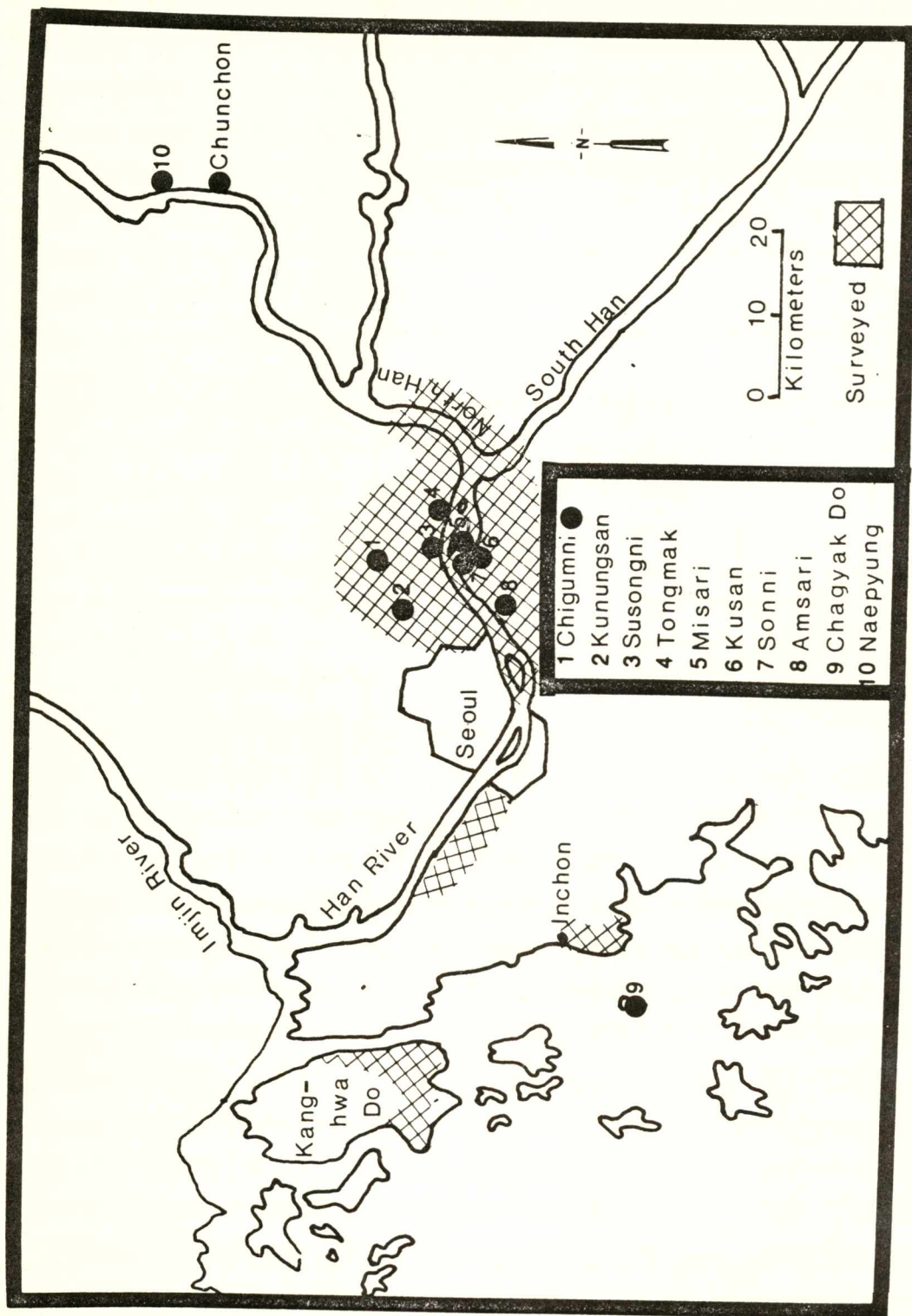


Fig. 12. Extended Survey Region



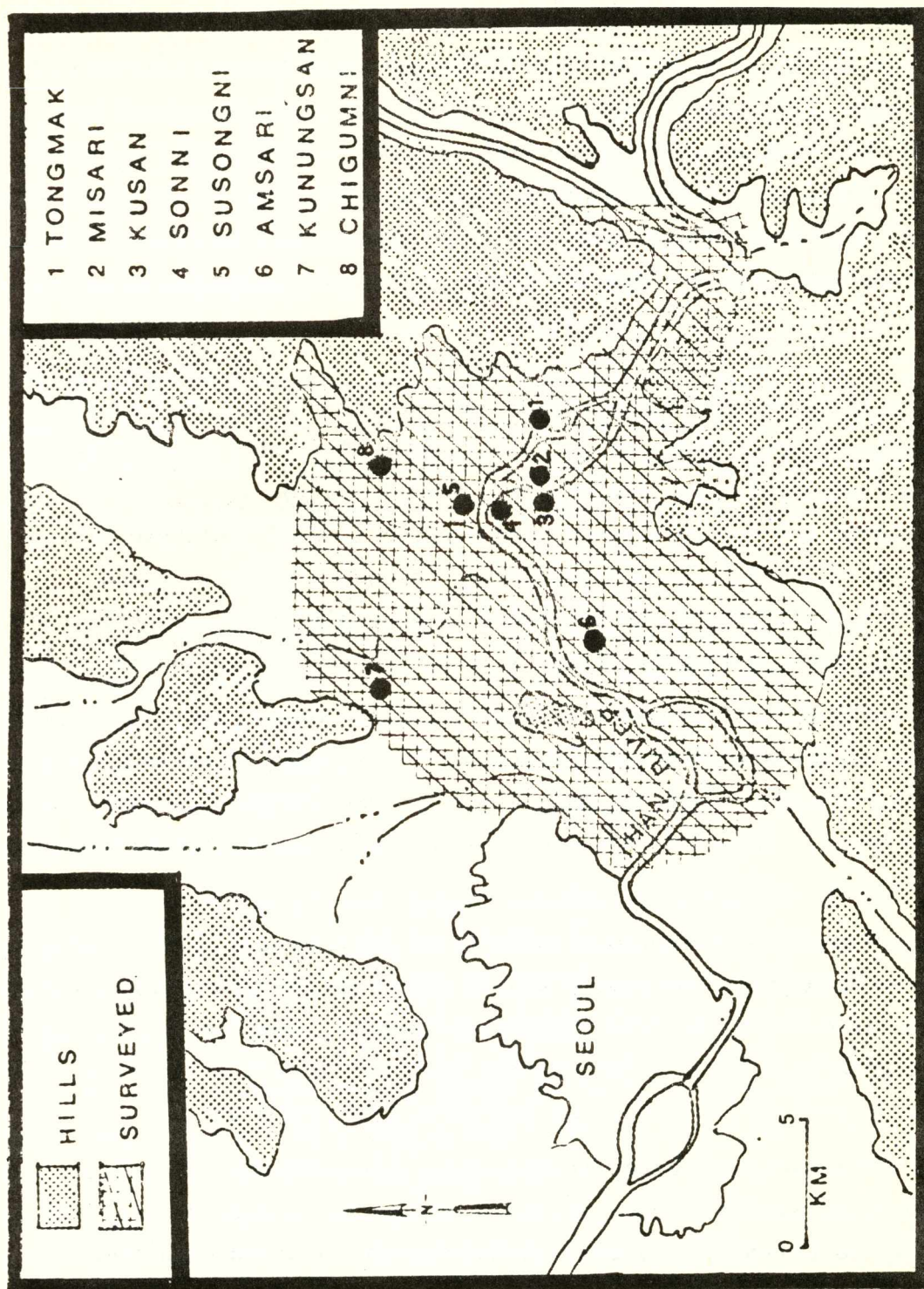


Fig. 13. Intensive Survey Region

In fact, not all the previously described sites could be located. In addition to walking over the terrain, Chulmun Period sites which had been reported in Korean journals were expressly sought. Those that could not be found were further checked when possible by contacting the person who had reported the site or find, to pinpoint the location more specifically. Sites which had been reported (Kim WY 1965, Oh SH 1961) and their condition as found by the survey team are discussed below.

#### Tongmak

The site of Tongmak, 25 km. upriver from Seoul, occupies a small terrace remnant of alluvium, about 10 m. above the winter level of the river. The river is fairly shallow at this point, although not fordable by wheeled transport or on foot, even in winter. There is a sand and gravel island in the river, and across the river to the southwest a large hill looms. There is a small wooded hill east of the site and another to the north,

The soil of the site itself is a sandy clay. Gravel and sand layers alternate near the river level, but there is no indication that the site itself has been flooded since the Chulmun layer was deposited. The soil above the Chulmun level appears to be slope-wash.

The site was mentioned briefly by Chase (n.d.), and in 1964 three soundings were dug by a crew from Seoul National University. The field notes indicate that no structures, pits, or burials were encountered. The typical Chulmun period inventory of incised sherds and chipped pebble tools was recovered from the soundings.

The surface scatter of "hoe-axes," net sinkers, and sherds covers the whole of an approximately 35 x 20 m. plowed area, and it is continuous for 5 to 10 m. past the cultivated area toward the river. The density of artifacts on the surface is not great, but it is frequently picked over by collectors.



One further sounding was made at this site, on the south side between two of the previous soundings (Figure 14). At a depth of 60 cm. incised sherds began to appear, and from that point on all dirt was screened. Beginning with the 60-65 cm. zone, 9 separate layers were bagged in 5 cm. intervals. Later analysis indicated that these layers had no relevance. Both the texture and color of the sandy clay matrix remained the same throughout—a dark red-brown, with more clay than sand. Below 110 cm. only sterile sand was encountered.

Scraping the profiles confirmed the lack of visible stratigraphy. The only variation was a small, shallow pit in the north wall which was well above the Chulmun level. Artifacts from this and other sites will be described in a later section.

#### Misari

Misari is on a shifting island in the middle of the river. At present it is not cut off from the south bank for most of the year but becomes a real island in the rainy season. Some old maps show it as a real island, and from the river deposits it appears that the main channel has been on each side of the island at different times.

The core of the present island seems to be a remnant of alluvial terrace capped by a soil. This remnant was isolated from the main terrace to the south by a cutoff channel. The north side of the island consists of flood sediments.

The site is rapidly being eroded by rains and the river. That which remains is probably only a small part of the original site. The site is on a bluff on the south side of the island, about 10 m. above low water level. Along the bluff, for about 50 m., there is a distinct blackish layer 50 cm. thick, beginning 65 cm. from the top of the bluff. Chase, who found this site, believed that this

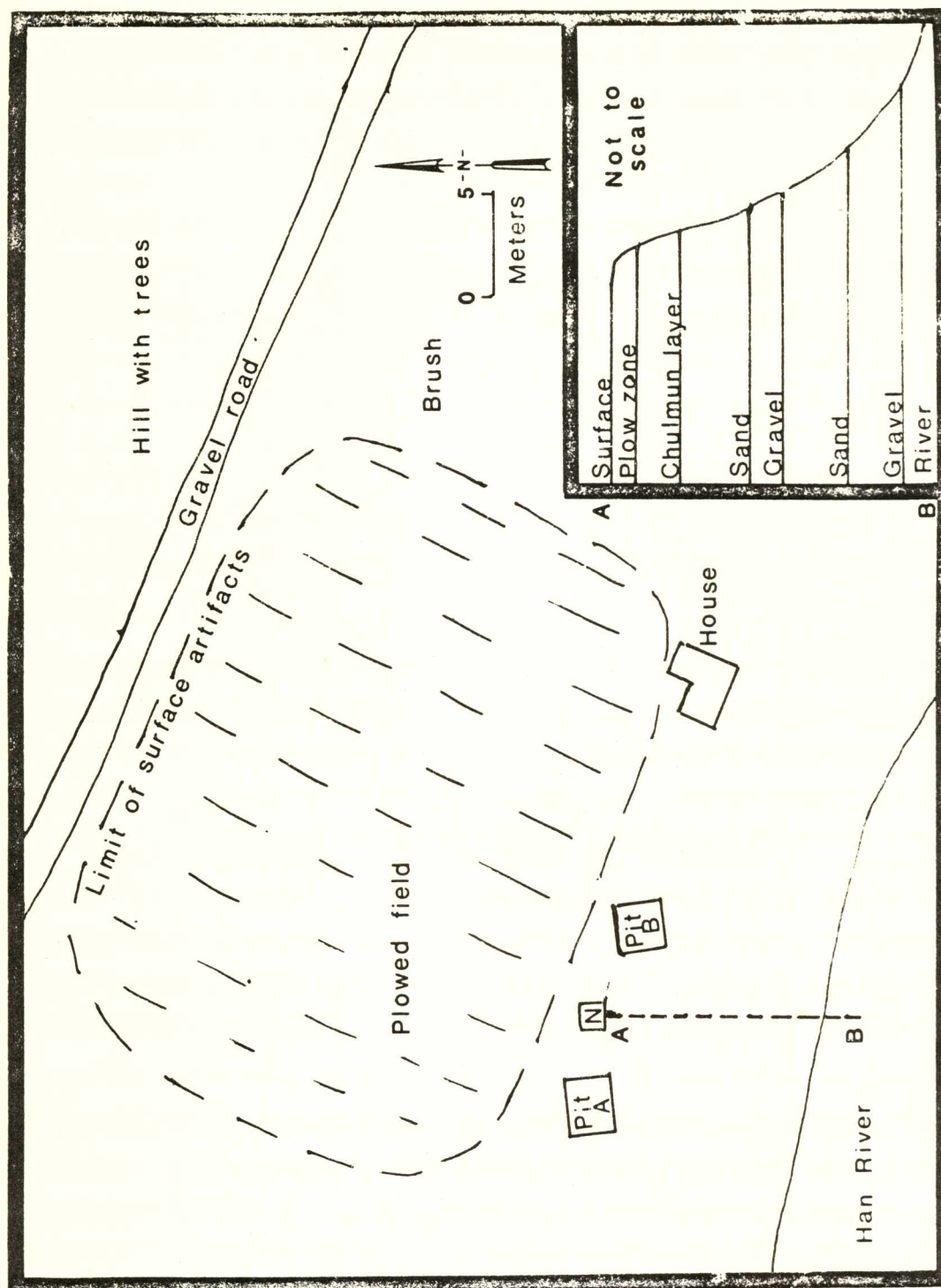


Fig. 14. Sketch Map of Tongmak. N = New Sounding.  
Inset: soil profile.

dark layer contained the Chulmun Period deposit. Tests were made by Chase (n.d.) and Kim WY (2969a). Chase illustrates a Mumun jar found almost intact within the black layer. There were also artifacts not usually found with Chulmuntogi, such as grooved net sinkers and polished axes. Very few Chulmun Period sherds were found.

Two other soundings were made at this site (Figure 15). The first was made a meter from the edge of the bluff, near a previous excavation, the outlines of which were still visible. In this sounding, the top layer consisted of brown sandy clay in which no artifacts were encountered for the first 50 cm. From 50 to 65 cm. there were few artifacts. Flotation produced only roots in the first two layers. From 65 cm. to 115 cm. the soil was black and seemed to be full of humus. It is the opinion of a professional geologist (Casper Cronk, personal communication) that the black soil could have formed in a shallow back-swamp of the river. Only one stone and seven sherds were found. Beneath the black layer was more brown sandy clay with no artifacts. Below this was another darker layer, not as black as the one above but dark brown, which yielded eleven Chulmun sherds.

From these results it was suspected that the Chulmun sherds found on the gravel below actually came from the lower dark layer rather than the conspicuous black one as had been previously reported. An isolated pedestal in the eroded bank was therefore chosen, which was exposed in steps. From this excavation it was clear that the Chulmun sherds, which were quite plentiful, came from the dark brown level 35 cm. below the black soil. Only the soil surrounding the Chulmun sherds was flotated, from which came several pieces of carbon and some small bone chips.

#### Kusan

Across the south arm of the river from Misari there is a granite hill which has limited the extent of the river erosion in



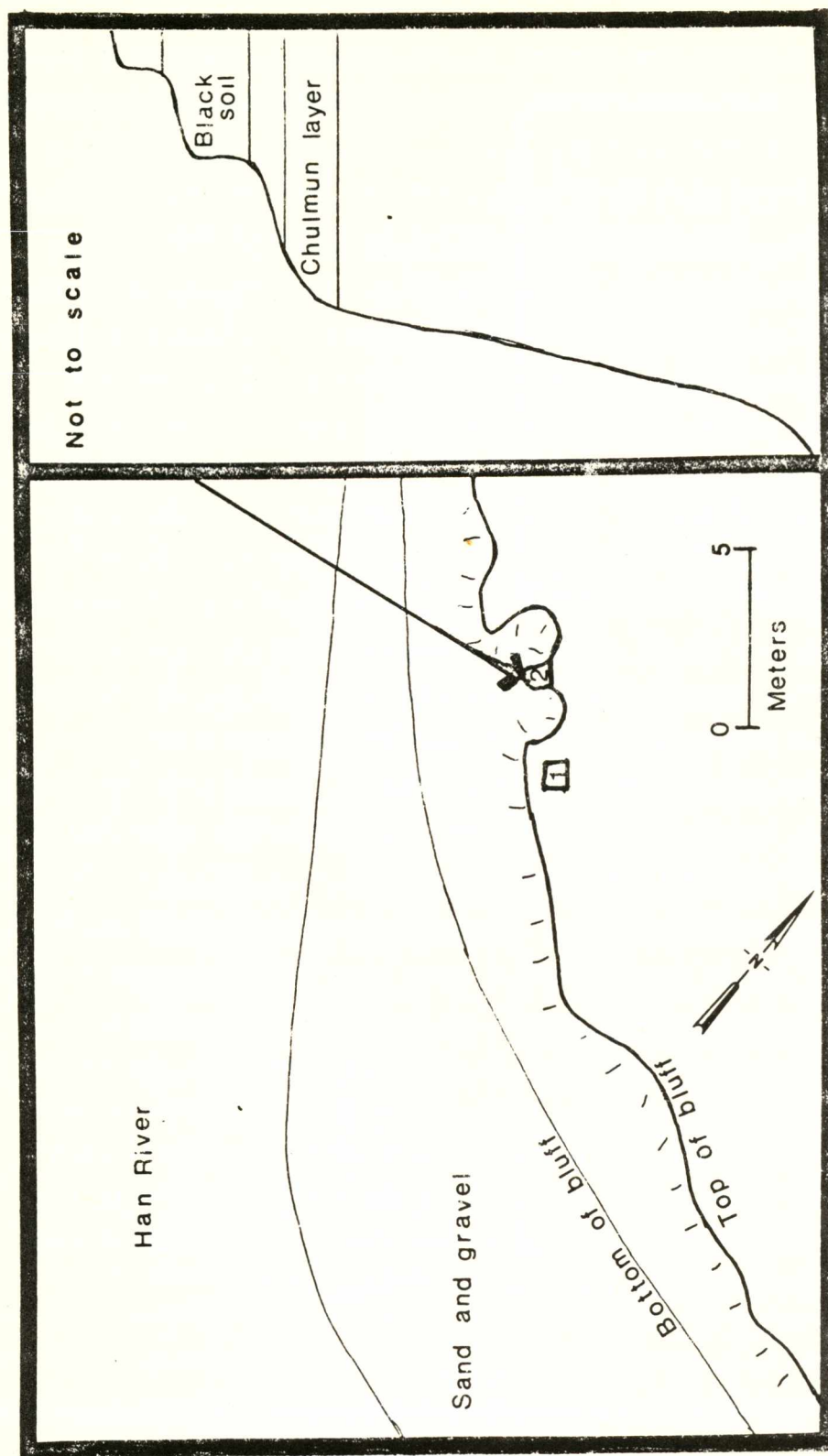


Fig. 15. Sketch Map of Misari.  
New Soundings: 1 and 2.  
Inset: soil profile.



this direction. This hill, and the village beside it, are both called Kusan. A small collection of bivalve mollusc shells, some acorns, some seeds, and a number of irregularly pointed rocks were found in a soil deposit. No sherds were found, and the quantity of shells was too small for an adequate radiocarbon sample. Therefore it is unknown what group of people partook of this meal, although the location points to the possibility of association with the Chulmun Period.

One Chulmun sherd has been reported from Kusan village (Kim WY 1965:8). Thorough exploration of both village and hill, however, turned up only a Mumuntogi site.

#### Sonni

This spit of land is an island during the rainy season, but at the time of survey it was joined to the south bank by a wide sandy strip. No excavations have been made here, although it was reported as a site by Fujita and the National Museum (Kim WY 1965:8). Only one water-worn sherd was found in the course of two very careful surveys. That particular sherd almost certainly came from Misari, less than 500 m. upstream. The whole island, although higher than the intervening sand strip, is inundated in years of exceptional precipitation. Traces of a recent village can still be seen, which an elderly informant told us had been a village of about 100 houses that was abandoned during a devastating flood in 1925. Probably there is a site at Sonni covered by alluvium, but nothing could be found on the surface, and the exact location of the previous finds was impossible to ascertain.

#### Susongni

The site of Susongni is near the top of a steep hill 60 m. high. The hill is at the river's edge on the north bank, but the site is just below the crest of the hill on the north. This site

was first discovered by Chase (1961 n.d.) and subsequently excavated by a team from the National Museum (Kim WY 1966). Only a handful of incised sherds was found, which differed in several characteristics from the Chulmuntogi of the other Han River sites.

#### Amsari

Amsari is at present almost a kilometer from the south bank of the Han River. The river is eroding the opposite bank at this point and has left a wide expanse of sand and gravel between the site and the present river channel. The village itself nestles in a horseshoe of low hills, but the site is on the edge of the hills, beyond the village on the side toward the river (Figure 16). The site was exposed by the same flood that destroyed Sonni, and afterwards large quantities of sherds and stone artifacts were collected from the surface by Japanese archaeologists. In 1968 the site was jointly excavated by several Korean universities (Kim KS 1970). Many of the artifacts and field notes were available for study. Since my departure from Korea further excavations have been carried out by the National Museum. Flotation samples were sent to me, as well as brief reports from Korean and English language newspapers in Seoul (Korea Times, Nov. 30, 1971; Hanguk Ilbo, August 12, 1971).

#### Chigumni

A site was reported at Chigumni from purported surface finds. The village is on the edge of the hills in the valley of a small tributary of the Han River. However, the survey crew found nothing but a polished stone projectile point of a type usually associated with Mumuntogi, and historic sherds. The villagers could tell us of no site.

#### Kunungsan

Kunungsan is across the flood plain of a small Han tributary

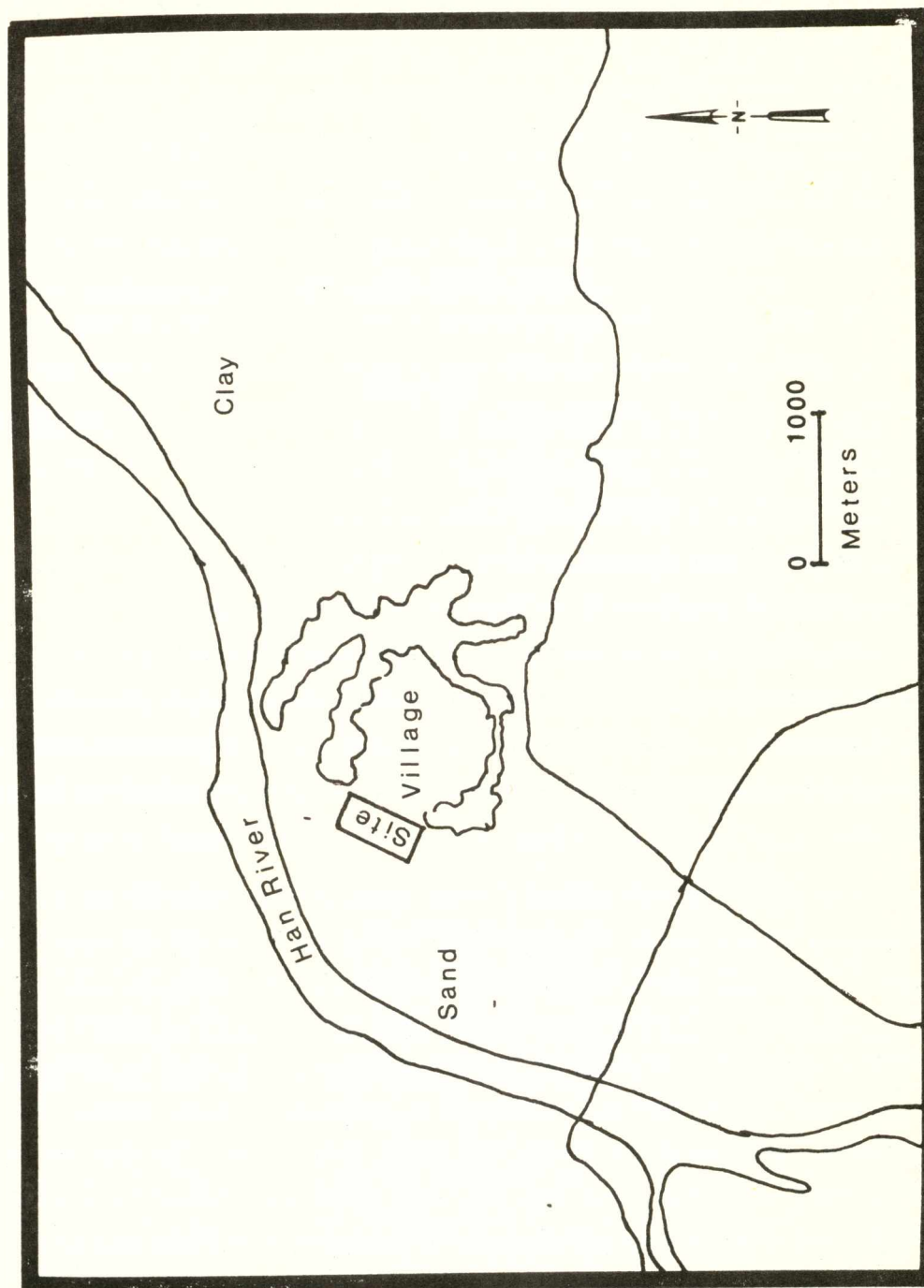


Fig. 16. Sketch Map of Amsari



from Chigumni. Meaning "Nine Royal Tombs Hill," this large eminence and its tombs are a favorite excursion from Seoul. The area has been thoroughly explored by picnickers, but no one could be located there who knew of any Chulmun site in the vicinity. There was a report of an isolated sherd, the exact location of which could not be pinpointed. No site was found by the survey crew.

#### Other Surveyed Areas

No additional Chulmun Period sites were found in the central survey area, although several unreported Mumuntogi sites were found, and Paekche sherds were found to be almost continuous on both sides of the river. If other Chulmun Period sites exist, they have been washed away or covered by fluvial deposits.

Other areas that were spot surveyed include Kanghwa Do, the lower part of the Han River north of Kimpo on the west bank, Chagyak Do off the west coast at Inchon, and both banks of the North Han between Yangsun and Chongpyung. Chulmun sherds were found only at Chagyak Do. A reported Chulmun Period shell mound on Kanghwa Do proved to be unreachable by the time we looked for it, in the rainy season.

#### Chagyak Do

Chagyak Do is a small steep island about 1 km. off the west coast of Korea at Inchon. On the east side of the island there is a mound composed largely of oyster shells. The shells form a heap on a steep slope approximately 10 m. wide and 15 m. long. The bottom of the mound is above the high tide mark. On the surface no pottery was seen, but one Chulmun sherd was found in a drainage ditch, and others had previously been collected from the site. A small sounding was made in the center of the mound. Near the top there were three Paekche sherds, and close to the base soil there

was one plain red sherd, compatible with Chulmun although undecorated. Since the hill slopes quite steeply, it was only 104 cm. from the surface of the mound to the ground at this location. Another area was tested where a piece of modern glass was found below a sherd of Koryo celadon. From this it was concluded that the mound had been disturbed, and it would not be possible to tell which parts of the mound were associated with the Chulmun Period. No further investigation was made of this site.

#### Naepyung

Naepyung is a site 130 km. from Seoul on a tributary of the North Han River. The site had been excavated the previous season by the National Museum and had not been backfilled since the entire region was to be flooded on completion of a nearby dam. The site is located on a sandy river terrace about 9.5 m. above river level, at a bend in the river. The excavations had revealed two house floors of nearly equal size (about 3 x 5 m.). Associated with one of them was Mumuntogi, with the other Chulmun sherds. The structure associated with Chulmuntogi was marked by a subrectangular ring of cobbles, with a large hearth toward one end.

Since no further excavations were planned for the site and the site was soon to be covered by a lake, we made three small excavations for the purpose of recovering carbonized plant and bone. The usual small scraps were collected. Some larger pieces of charcoal were taken from the hearth for identification.