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## PVN OP 032 Excavation Report

Edward M. Schortman  
*Kenyon College*

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## Operation 32

Operation 32, in the southeast corner of La Sierra's North Cluster, consists of four clear surface-visible constructions (Strs. 33-36) arranged around a patio. Structures 33-35 appeared during initial mapping to be joined, forming an extensive L-shaped construction that closed off the patio's northern (Strs. 34 and 35) and part of its eastern sides (Str. 33). Structure 36, 10m south of Str. 33, is on the patio's southeastern corner and remnants of what might have been the northern corner of a surface-level construction lie 15m west and 28m south of Strs. 36 and 34 on the patio's southeastern corner. Structures 34 and the aforementioned surface-level building are truncated by the Quebrada Danta, the northward cutting of this watercourse having destroyed an undetermined amount of Op.32 deposits. The land surrounding Op. 32 is fairly level, ascending 0.12m over 22.37m west-to-east and 0.54m across 14.87 north-to-south. The southern descent into the quebrada is ca. 3m deep and precipitous. Excavations conducted here within Subops. 32A/P revealed approximately 95% of Str. 33, 45% of Str. 35, and an undetermined proportion of a previously undetected building within the patio (Str. 32-Sub1). Roughly 108m<sup>2</sup> of prehistoric deposits were uncovered during the course of these investigations. All Op. 32 research was directed by L. Collins from February 19-April 22, 1990.

## Structure 33

Structure 33 delimits the patio's northeastern margin, seemingly joined to Str. 35 on the west and separated by 10m of apparently open terrain from Str. 36 on the south. The landscape in Str. 33's immediate environs is more-or-less level, rising 0.56m over 11.97m east-to-west and 0.54m across 14.87m north-to-south. Excavations here, pursued within Subops. 32B, C-G, L, O, and P, uncovered roughly 95% of the building, including the entirety of its summit (ca. 60m<sup>2</sup> cleared in all). Digging was carried down to maximum depths of 1.56m and 1m below modern ground surface outside construction and into architecture, respectively. A single clear building stage was identified for Str. 33-1st, during which the edifice underwent several major renovations. Fragments of three constructions (Strs. 32-Sub2-4) were unearthed east and west of Str. 33-1st, all predating the raising of that platform.

## Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	-	-	S.1	-	LCLI, LCLII
2	Str. 32-Sub2-1st	U.1	-	-	LCLII?
3	-	-	S.1,2	-	LCLII
4	Str. 32-Sub3-1st Str. 32-Sub4-1st	U.2,3 U.4	-	-	LCLII

5	-	-	S.2-9	-	LCLII/III
6	Str. 33-1st	U.5-33	-	F.1, 3	LCLII/III, LCLIII, EPC
7	-	-	S.2, 8, 10-13	F.4	-

Note: There is no F.2.

### Time Span 1

At least 0.25m of S.1, a fine-textured, hard-compacted, reddish-brown soil, was laid down prior to the initiation of any construction revealed in our excavations on and around Str. 33. Based on the placement of stones comprising U.1, the earliest architecture identified in Str. 33's environs, S.1 ascended 0.18m over 1.34m east-to-west. Stratum 1 was uncovered only in the deep probe dug off Str. 33-1st's eastern flank, its base lying beyond excavation limits. The large quantities of cultural material recovered from this layer, including pottery sherds, obsidian tool fragments, and bajareque pieces, strongly point to a significant human occupation in the area while S.1 was being deposited.

### Time Span 2

A 1.38m-long (east-west) segment of U.1 was revealed 1.6m east of Str. 33-1st. Unit 1 is 0.1-0.13m high wall, composed of a single line of unmodified river cobbles, and is aligned roughly 272 degrees. A reddish-brown mud mortar was used to bind the rocks together, but there are no chinking stones. Rock sizes range from 0.11x0.19m to 0.1x0.27m. Unit 1 rests on what was seemingly an east-to-west incline in S.1, the wall mounting 0.18m in that direction over its exposed extent. Given U.1's low height, we suspect that it served as a foundation demarcating the perimeter of an earthen-floored surface-level building (Str. 33-Sub2-1st).

### Time Span 3

Following Str. 33-Sub2-1st's abandonment, the edifice was covered by the resumed deposition of S.1. The latter blankets U.1 by 0.19-0.34m, sloping up 0.12m over an exposed 1.48m from east to west. Roughly 0.28m of S.2, a very fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, tan soil covers S.1 during TS.3. Given the relative elevations of two constructions built on S.2 during the subsequent time span (U.2 and 3), it appears that S.2 rose 0.13m across 1.47m east-to-west. Like its predecessor, S.2 contains large quantities of cultural remains, especially sherds, carbon flecks, and fragments of bajareque. Such contents point to a substantial human occupation in the vicinity during S.2's deposition.

### Time Span 4

Units 2 and 3 are 0.2m and 0.13m high, respectively, cobble walls spaced 1.38m apart east-west, lying 0.45-0.54m above U.1 and east of Str. 33-1st. The former was exposed for 0.55m north-south while the latter was traced for 0.95m in the same direction. These entities are

each composed of a single line of stones set in a tan mud mortar and are 0.45m (U.2) and 0.22m wide (U.3). Both elements are fashioned, primarily, of unmodified river cobbles, though a few schist slabs seem to have been incorporated in U.3. The relatively insubstantial nature of U.2 and 3 hints at their use as foundations delimiting the border of a surface-level structure(s). Their proximity and similar orientations (351 and 355 degrees for U.2 and 3, in turn) very tentatively suggests that U.2 and 3 defined the western and eastern flanks of the same edifice. The slight differences in elevation between the two units (U.2 is 0.13m higher than U.3) does not preclude such an interpretation. The room floor may have tilted slightly downhill (to the east) or could have been leveled through the judicious addition of earth derived from S.2, said fill being indiscernible now. *If* U.2 and 3 are part of the same building, they would have enclosed at least one earthen floored room that encompassed 1.38m east-west. We cannot rule out the possibility, however, that the elements in question are parts of two distinct constructions.

Unit 4 protrudes from beneath Str. 33-1st's western basal facing and step (U.6 and 29), 8.46m west of U.2. This element is at least 0.17m high, 0.52m wide, and was traced for 2.5m north-south along an azimuth of roughly 8 degrees. Neither the base nor back (east) side of U.4 were identified, so the entity may be somewhat taller and wider than indicated here. Unit 4 rests minimally 0.22m above U.2, though this discrepancy may speak less to temporal relations than to the east-to-west ascent of the terrain on which these U.2-4 were raised. All three immediately underlie Str. 33-1st construction and so are placed in the same time span. Unit 4's presumed low height suggests that it, like U.1-3, served as a footing incorporated into the perimeter of a surface-level building. This foundation is built of unmodified river cobbles the naturally flatter aspects of which are oriented out to the west. A tan mud mortar was used as a binding agent.

Units 2-4 are most likely remnants of a complex of surface-level buildings that occupied the area eventually covered by Str. 33-1st. At least two of these relatively insubstantial constructions were revealed here, generally oriented north-south (351-8 degrees).

### Time Span 5

Continued deposition of S.2 eventually covered U.2 on the east. West of that construction, S.2 is blanketed by 0.11-0.18m of fine-textured, moderately soft-compacted, gray ash containing numerous carbon flecks (S.3). Stratum 3 buries U.2's western face and slopes up 0.05m over 1.2m from east to west. Stratum 4, a lens composed of coarse-textured, soft-compacted, tan soil containing very large quantities of small pebbles (0.03m or less in diameter), overlies U.3 and S.2 on the east. This deposit begins 0.05m east of U.2 and gradually expands westward, achieving a thickness of at least 0.36m. Stratum 4's base conforms to the west-to-east descent of S.2, while its top rises 0.14m over 1.83m in that direction.

Strata 5-7 comprise the sequence of soils underlying Str. 33-1st architecture on the north. The first (lowest) is a very coarse-textured, hard-compacted, brown soil containing high densities of pebbles 0.01m and less in diameter. Stratum 5 was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.27m (its base was not identified) and maintains a more-or-less even surface over the 0.9m north-south it was exposed (note the similarities between S.4, on the east, and S.5). Stratum 6, a fine-textured, hard-compacted, brown clay, succeeds S.5 on the south (the 3.28m separating exposures of S.5 and 6 horizontally were not excavated, so we can not specify how these elements were related). Stratum 6 ascends 0.03m across 0.62m north-to-south and was uncovered to a maximum thickness of 0.14m (S.6's base lies beyond excavation limits). Stratum 7, a fine-textured, soft-compacted, gray ash, covers S.6 by 0.12m near Str. 33-1st's

center-line where it slopes up 0.21m across 1.8m north-to-south. Near the platform's northeast corner, a deep probe revealed a 0.4m-thick exposure of S.7 containing large quantities of artifacts, especially pottery sherds (the level's base lies beyond excavation limits here). We seem to have encountered two instances of an extensive trash deposit laid down prior to TS.6 construction. Stratum 3, on the east, resembles S7 in composition and stratigraphic position vis a vis Str. 33-1st architecture and may be part of the same debris level.

Off Str. 33-1st's southern flank, a 0.07m-thick exposure of S.2 is overlain by S.8, a coarse-textured, hard-compacted, tan sand (S.2's base was not revealed). An estimated 0.14m of S.8 was deposited during TS.5.

Stratum 9 was encountered during the clearing of Str. 33-1st's northeastern corner, the same efforts that resulted in the exposure of S.7 noted earlier. Here, S.9, a very fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, tan soil, covers S.7 by 0.16-0.2m. Stratum 9 was exposed over no more than 0.81m east-west, over which distance it, like underlying S.7, maintained a fairly even upper surface.

The markedly different soil types introduced during TS.5 suggest that varied natural and cultural process (e.g., S.3 and 7) were responsible for the sequence revealed in excavation. The extensive distribution of artifact-rich gray ash east and north of Str. 33-1st, whether all exposures were part of the same deposit or not, points to a sizable human population on or near this spot during the interval immediately preceding Str. 33-1st's erection.

### Time Span 6

Structure 33-1st is a platform bordered on all sides by vertical stone walls that rise 0.55-0.88m (U.5-8). The highest, most substantial of these facings (U.8, 0.66-95m across) defines the structure's eastern boundary where it faces over a west-to-east drop-off. Unit 8 may have been enhanced, relative to the other basal walls, to preserve that side of the building most vulnerable to erosion. Platform fill, in those limited areas where it was exposed, consists of moderately dense concentrations of river cobbles suspended in a tan soil (U.30).

The summit is divided roughly in half into southern and northern segments, the latter being ca. 0.2m above the former. Formal entrance to the superstructure was from the south where the edifice is fronted by a 0.37m-high by 1-1.3m-wide terrace (U.26). Unit 26's southern facing is capped by a course of faced blocks (unique in its extensive use of masonry for Str. 33-1st) and runs for the entire south face of the platform, actually extending 0.2m east of the building's southeast corner. The terrace's southeast corner is inset, measuring 0.3x0.8m.

Unit 26 terminates on the north in the 0.22m-high step-up to the summit defined by that portion of the southern basal wall (U.5) that protrudes above U.26. Here, traffic is channeled through a 1.1m-wide by 2.4m-long stone-paved (U.33) corridor delimited by 0.35m-high by 0.47-0.49m-wide cobble walls (U.16 and 18). Unit 18 is a free-standing entity whose 1.3m north-south length defines the eastern side of the entryway. Unit 16, on the west, extends 2.5m north from U.5 and is built atop an earlier stone construction (U.10). Unit 10 is at least 0.52m high (its base was only tentatively recognized when excavations were brought to a close) and continued to protrude 0.14m above the final passageway floor. There is no sign that U.18 overlies a comparable antecedent. Unit 10 was exposed for 1.6m north-south. Its southern end was not uncovered but, on the north, U.10 is abutted by another earlier construction, U.11. The latter stands 0.6m high and, as was the case with U.10, continued to protrude above the final-phase floor. Unit 11, in fact, serves as the 0.2m-high step-up to the northern summit within the

completed edifice.

Flanking the entryway on the east and west are Rooms 6 and 1. Room 1 covers 1.8x2.1m, its northeast quadrant taken up by a 0.3m-high shelf measuring 1x1.35m (U.14 and 15). Unit 28, a 0.35m-high stone block encompassing approximately 0.8x1m, backs this construction on the north. The shelf's summit is on roughly the same level as the northern summit floor. Unit 16 bounds the enclosure on the east while substantial cobble walls delimit the southern and western sides (U.13 and the upper portion of U.6). Units 6 and 13 rise ca. 0.5m above Room 1's earthen floor and measure 0.85-0.93m across. The 0.75m between the shelf's western facing (U.15) and U.6 is sealed by U.17. This 0.45m-high by 0.38m-wide wall abuts U.6 and 15. Unit 13 is sufficiently long (2.1m east-west from its junction with U.16) and wide (0.85m) that it could have doubled as both a wall support and a bench on Room 1's southern flank. Unit 6 is wide (0.93m across) and long enough (1.1m within Room 1) to have been both a shelf and footing. A 0.95m-wide doorway in Room 1's southwestern corner provided access to the enclosure. Said door could be reached from the U.26 terrace through a 0.6m-wide gap between U.13 and the western basal facing (U.6).

Room 6, east of the entry corridor, covers 2.34x3m and is open to the east and south. Unit 18 delimits the compartment's western margin while 0.4m-high by 0.65m-wide U.20 marks the northern limits. The latter is fronted by a ca. 0.4m-high stone-faced and -surfaced bench (U.12). Unit 12 is a 1.5m long (east-west) construction the irregular southern edge of which steps back in (north) towards U.20 from west to east. This variation yields a width for U.12 ranging from 0.6-0.85m. Room 6 is paved with cobbles (U.19), the floor possibly dropping down from west to east. A 0.2m-high step (F.2) was tentatively identified 0.9m east of U.18, though we were not convinced of the reality of this element. Room 6 was easily reached from U.26 or through a 0.75m-wide passage between U.18 and the southern basal facing (U.5). Unlike Room 1, therefore, Room 6 could be accessed directly from the formal entryway.

As noted above, the central passageway was bounded on the north by the upper 0.2m of U.11. Unit 25, a line of rocks lying flush with the summit surface, is 0.56m north of U.11. Though not established, U.25 is probably U.11's northern face. Together, these two elements constitute a threshold marking the boundary between the southern and northern summit during the final construction phase. The threshold, 1.25m wide and bounded by 0.35-0.4m-high walls on the east (U.20) and west (U.28), issues directly into a vestibule on the north (Room 5). Room 5 encompasses 0.85x2.1m and is bordered by low cobble walls on the east (U.24, 0.22m high by 0.4m wide) and west (U.21, 0.26m high by 0.3m across). On the north, U.22 marks a 0.06m step-down into Room 3. The latter is surfaced with cobbles (U.32) and measures 1.45x2.45m. Its entire eastern wall is taken up by a 0.34m-high stone-faced and -surfaced bench (U.23). Unit 23 is 1m wide east-west and 1.45m long north-south. This construction, in concert with U.22, also bounds the northern side of Room 5.

Flanking Rooms 3 and 5 on the east and west are Rooms 2 and 4, respectively. The first encompasses 1.14x2.45m, is demarcated by U.7, 23/24, 20, and 8/9 on the north, west, south, and east, and is paved with cobbles (U.31). Large quantities of *bajareque* were found amongst the tumbled stones directly above U.31. Units 8 and 9 combine to form the eastern basal facing. The former ascends 0.42m and runs back 0.23-0.64m to U.9 which rises an additional 0.46m to the summit. Room 2 was entered from Room 5 through a 0.85m-wide doorway in the former's southwest corner between U.20 and 23. Such a passage required stepping on and over the 0.22m-high wall that spans this opening (U.24). Room 4, on Room 3's western flank, is delimited by U.7, 6, 17, 28, and 21 on the north, west, south, and east. This earthen-floored

enclosure covers 1.44x2.45m and contains no extant built-in furniture. Both U.6 and 7 are sufficiently wide (ca. 0.7m across) that they could have doubled as benches and supports for upper walls. A 0.3m-wide gap between U.21 and 28 may have been the point of access between Rooms 4 and 5, though this would have been an unusually narrow doorway. More likely this passage facilitated the passage of air, rather than people, across Room 4.

In addition to the southern entryway, there is a 0.35m-wide by approximately 1.15m-long step (the northern limit was not clear) capped with schist slabs on the approximate center-line of the platform's western facing (U.29). Unit 29 is set on and rises 0.23m above U.4 (see TS.4), the latter possibly still exposed during this interval. The ascent to the summit over U.6 here is still a considerable 0.5m, though U.6's top may have been cut back in this area, creating, with U.29, a series of three low steps each riser standing 0.2-0.3m tall. The treads are 0.35-0.44m wide. The U.6/29 steps provide access to Room 4 and 1.

Two enigmatic constructions, U.27 and F.1/3, lie off Str. 33-1st's southwestern corner and north face, respectively. Unit 27 is a single line of cobbles and, predominately, cut blocks standing 0.06-0.09m high that runs at least 1.4m west from U.26's southwest corner. These stones rest ca. 0.1m above U.4 and may be the northern foundation of a surface-level building that continues westward beyond excavation limits. Unit 27's stratigraphic position, abutting U.26 and above U.4, suggest its contemporaneity with the final building phase.

Feature 1, a collection of schist slabs packed round with cobbles identified near Str. 33-1st's centerline, is located 0.61m north of the platform's northern basal wall (U.7). The slabs are set on end and tilt north from vertical. This putative construction is 0.71m wide and rises very roughly 0.25m above ancient ground surface. Unfortunately, we could not determine F.1's horizontal extent. The apparent purposeful placement of the F.1 rocks argues against its inclusion within post-abandonment architectural tumble (F.4) while the feature's stratigraphic position, 0.07-0.17m above U.7's base, implies that it was introduced after the latter facing was already in place. The 0.61m intervening between U.7 and F.1 is filled with flat-laid cobbles and some schist slabs set in a tan soil matrix (F.3). *If* F.1 is an actual construction (something we would be more willing to affirm if it could have been traced it east and west of the original exposure) then F.3 would likely be fill packed in behind (south) of the slabs, between F.1 and U.7. Feature 1 might, therefore, be the poorly preserved northern limit of a 0.25m-high by 1.3m-wide terrace appended to Str. 33-1st's northern face relatively late in the construction sequence.

Structure 33-1st is a 0.55-0.88m-tall platform, measuring 6.74x7.84m (excluding F.1/3 and U.29), and oriented roughly 89 degrees. Little is known concerning its construction history, save that the presence of earlier walls (U.10 and 11) point to a period of renovation preceding the final version. The summit of this late manifestation is divided into northern and southern halves, the former standing 0.2m above the latter. The southern segment has two rooms flanking a central entry corridor, the northern portion contains three rooms accessed from a central vestibule. A 0.37m-high by 1.1-1.3m-wide terrace runs for the entire length of the southern face. This construction terminates on the north in a 0.22m-high step-up to a north-south running corridor, the latter encompassing 2.6m<sup>2</sup>. Flanking this passageway on the west and east are two enclosures (Room 1 and 6). The latter is paved with cobbles over its 7m<sup>2</sup>, is open on the east and south, and has a 0.4m-high, 1.5m-long by 0.6-0.85m-wide stone-faced and surfaced bench set into its northern wall. Access to the interior is through a 0.75m-wide doorway in the compartment's southwest corner, connecting Room 6 to the entry corridor. Room 1 covers 3.8m<sup>2</sup>, and has at least one 0.3m-high stone-faced shelf built into its northeast



corner. Said construction measures 1x1.35m. The southern perimeter wall is wide and long enough (0.85x2.1m) to have served as both bench and foundation while its western counterpart (0.93x1.1m) may have acted as footing and shelf. A 0.95m-wide doorway in the room's southwestern corner provides access from the southern terrace but not from the central corridor.

The formal passageway ends on the north in a 0.2m-high stone-faced ascent to the northern summit. The latter is reached by stepping over a 1.25m-wide, stone-surfaced threshold that gives way directly to a vestibule covering 1.8m<sup>2</sup> (Room 5). From this point, the three northern compartments, arranged in an east-west line, can be reached. The central member of this set, Room 3, measures 3.6m<sup>2</sup>, most of its eastern half taken up by a 0.34m-high stone-faced and -surfaced bench that covers 1 by 1.45m. This bench also borders Room 5 on the north and defines most of the western side of Room 2. The latter covers 2.8m<sup>2</sup> and was entered through a 0.85m-wide doorway in its southwestern corner. Room 4, immediately west of Room 3, measures 3.5m<sup>2</sup> and may have been bounded on the north and west by foundations that doubled as a bench (U.6, on the west, 0.7m wide by 2.45m long) and shelf (U.7, on the north, 0.7m wide by 1.44m long). A 0.3m-wide passageway in Room 4's southeastern corner possibly facilitated the movement of air across the enclosure. All rooms are delimited by low stone foundations.

An alternative means of entering Str. 33-1st's superstructure is provided by three steps set into the approximate center of the building's western face. These risers were created by appending a basal step to the platform's western basal wall and then cutting two additional ascents into that facing. The resulting treads are 0.35-0.44m wide, each step standing 0.2-0.3m tall. Access to Rooms 1 and 4 on the southern and northern summits, respectively, could be achieved from these steps.

A surface-level building appears to have been appended to Str. 33-1st's southwestern corner while, on the north, a 0.25m-high by 1.3m-wide stone-faced terrace may have been added to the platform's northern basal wall late in TS.6.

Facings and foundations are made primarily of unmodified river cobbles the naturally flatter aspects of which are directed outwards. Cut blocks cap the southern facing of Str. 33-1st's southern terrace, four of these stones are set atop the southern basal wall (U.5) where it fronts the entry corridor, and five blocks make up the top course of the western basal facing (U.6) where it faces the western steps (U.29). Cobbles, for the most part, underlie these masonry blocks in both cases. Unit 27, the putative foundation for the surface-level building located off Str. 33-1st's southwest corner, consists almost exclusively of cut blocks and masonry is occasionally noted scattered among far more numerous unmodified stones in other Str. 33-1st architecture. The above distribution of masonry suggests that cut blocks were selectively placed to mark formal entrances into Str. 33-1st's superstructure, in addition to being used along with cobbles in the creation of basal facings and wall foundations. Schist slabs are rarer constituents of wall construction. They seem, however, to be the primary materials from which the tentatively identified northern terrace (F.1) was made and they were used to form the tread on the U.29 step. A tan to brown mud mortar was used as a binding agent in all cases. Horizontal coursing of the larger stones is noted in most instances, gaps among these rocks filled in with generous numbers of chinking stones. Rock sizes range from 0.07x0.1m to 0.22x0.61m, most falling towards the middle and low end of that range.

## Time Span 7

Following abandonment, S.2 and 8 continued to accumulate on Str. 33-1st's eastern,

southern, and northern flanks. On the west, S.10, a very coarse-textured, moderately hard-compacted, tan soil containing numerous small (0.01m or less in diameter) pebbles, was laid down over U.4, 29, and the lower portions of U.6. Subsequently, S. 2, 8, and 10 were covered by S.12 and 13, a coarse-textured, moderately hard-compacted soil distinguished by the darker brown hue of, and denser concentration of small roots in, overlying S.13. Together, S.12 and 13 bury soils deposited earlier by 0.32-1.02m and cover all but the uppermost rocks of Str. 33-1st. Stratum 11 is a lens of very coarse-textured, moderately hard-compacted, dark brown soil in which large quantities of pebbles, 0.02m and less in diameter, are found. This layer begins 2.36m east of Str. 33-1st resting on S.4 and expands to 0.4m thick on its eastern revealed margin at the edge of excavation. Stratum 11 is similar to S.12, which covers it on the west, the two being distinguished by S.11's greater concentration of pebbles. Embedded within earth layers laid down in TS.7 is a moderately dense concentration of stones fallen from final-phase architecture (F.4). Feature 4 extends for at least 4.8m, 1.26m, 3.54m, and 1.16m north, south, east, and west of Str. 33-1st and is found over all exposed portions of the building. Tumbled rocks are particularly dense within 1.3m north, and 1.16m east of the edifice.

### Structure 35

Excavations revealed that Str. 35 was a distinct building lying 1.55m west of Str. 33. The land here rises gradually from west to east, ascending 0.79m across 7.4m in that direction. The terrain also slopes upward 0.51m over 5m north-to-south. Excavations conducted here within Subops. 32A, H, I, J, and K cleared roughly 31m<sup>2</sup>, revealing enough of Str. 35 to determine the dimensions and general form of its final version (Str. 35-1st). Digging was carried down to maximum depths of 1.01m and 1.2m below modern ground surface outside construction and into architectural fill, respectively. This work, directed by L. Collins, identified at least two construction stages.

### Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	-	-	S.1-5	-	MPrecl, LCLI, LCLII/III
2	Str. 35-2nd	U.1-4, 11	-	-	LCLII/III?
3	Str. 35-1st	U.5-10, 12-14	-	F.1	LCLII/III, LCLIII, EPC
4	-	-	S.4, 6-9	F.2	-

### Time Span 1

Stratum 1 is a very-coarse-textured, moderately hard-compacted, brown sand in which a very dense concentration of pebbles (0.01m in diameter and less) are suspended. It was uncovered at the base of excavation east and west of Str. 35. Exposed in two discontinuous segments separated by 3.65m of unexcavated terrain, S.1 was revealed to a maximum thickness of 0.28m (its base lies beyond excavation limits). This layer rises 0.28m over 0.6m west-to-east, then descends 0.14m, across 4.22m in the same direction. Stratum 1 underlies uncovered architecture by 0.2m and is buried on the east by S.3, a very fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, tan soil containing large amounts of cultural material, including pottery sherds, bajareque fragments, and charcoal flecks. Stratum 3 grades imperceptibly into overlying fill (U.14), so it is hard to say how much of this soil was laid down in TS.1. At least the 0.2m of S.3 that intervenes between S.1 and Str. 33-2nd construction (U.1) was likely deposited during this early interval. Stratum 3 is replaced on the east by S.2, a lens composed of fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, reddish-brown soil that contains some cultural material. Stratum 2 emerges from the base of excavation 1.01m east of U.1 and expands to a maximum exposed thickness of 0.12m (S.2's base was not encountered).

On the west, S.1 is covered by moderately coarse-textured, hard-compacted, tan earth in which a few, scattered pebbles with diameters of 0.01m or less were recorded (S.4). Stratum 4 follows the west-to-east upward slope of S.1. The former, however, continued to accumulate after Str. 35-1st was abandoned and we could not discern how much of S.4 was laid down in TS.1. As was the case with S.3 on the east, the 0.2m of S.4 that separates S.1 from later architecture (U.10 in this case) must have been introduced at this time. Stratum 5, a fine-textured, hard-compacted, brown soil, was laid down against S.4's western slope. This layer was revealed to a maximum thickness of 0.3m (the base was not identified) and rises 0.09m across 2.48m west-to-east.

Recovery of cultural material from S.2-5 indicates a human presence in the immediate environs while these strata were being deposited. Artifacts and carbon flecks are so dense in S.3 that we suspect the layer had a, primarily, cultural origin (e.g., construction fill). The general west-to-east ascent of S.1 and 4 suggest that Strs. 35-2nd and 35-1st were raised atop a low rise, though whether the ascent was of natural or cultural origin we cannot say.

## Time Span 2

Structure 35-2nd consists of a low platform bordered on the east by a room set on ground surface. The platform is bounded by 0.25-0.3m-high cobble walls (U.1, 2, and 11). Units 1, 2, and 11 are all of the appropriate heights and elevations to have served as facings for the same platform, though none of them are interdigitated; U.2 abuts U.1 and U.1 abuts U.11. No built-in furniture or room dividers were identified during extensive clearing of the summit, though the entire surface is paved with cobbles (U.4). Unit 3, a 0.25m-high by 0.95m-wide wall, is located 2.22m east of U.1. Unit 3's base is 0.1m below that of U.1 and both are set on or in S.3, a stratigraphic relation that hints at their contemporaneity. The architectural significance of U.3 is, however, not clear. Most likely it functioned as the foundation for an earthen-floored surface-level room adjoining Str. 35-2nd's platform, said enclosure being open on the north. Unit 11, therefore, marks the enclosure's southern limit while the platform's eastern facing, U.1, delimits the western flank. No built-in furniture was recorded within the 1.66x2.2m covered by this room.

Structure 35-2nd, therefore, includes a 0.25-0.3m-high platform that encompasses

2.4x2.75m and is aligned roughly 266 degrees, 30 minutes. The edifice's summit is devoid of features indicative of superstructure form, though this area was completely paved with stones. A large earthen-floored room open to the north extends 3.11m east of the aforementioned platform. The room's interior covers 1.66x2.2m and contains no other recognizable features. Including platform and room, Str. 35-2nd's dimensions are 2.4x5.51m. The facings, foundations, and floor are built of unmodified cobbles, their flatter aspects directed outwards, and set in a brown earth mortar. Horizontal coursing of the larger rocks was noted in the walls comprising Str. 35-2nd, chinking stones being used to fill in the gaps among the more sizable cobbles in facings, footings, and floor.

### Time Span 3

During this interval, Str. 35-2nd was apparently incorporated within an enlarged version of Str. 35 (Str. 35-1st). The absence of a clear summit surface and superstructure architecture renders much of what follows conjectural. Nevertheless, enough different lines of evidence converge to give us some faith in the following interpretation.

The northern flank is now faced with three terraces, U.6, 7, and 8 in ascending order. They are 0.29-0.48m high and have stone-paved treads that measure 0.42m (U.6) and 0.8m (U.7) across. Projecting 0.35m north of U.6 near the latter's approximate center is a low step (U.5) that runs at least 1.15m east-west (the western margin was not identified). Together, U.5-8 provided a formal means for accessing the earthen-floored summit.

On the east, U.9, a 0.36m-high cobble riser, is set on U.3, ca. 0.6m back (west) from the latter's eastern margin. Units 3 and 9 now apparently served as Str. 35-1st's eastern terraces. Yet another riser may lay unexcavated west of U.9. How U.9 relates to U.6 and 7 remains unclear, though it appears that the first entity marks the eastern edge of the last two terraces. Unit 10, a 0.56m-high wall, defines the building's western flank. This facing is separated from U.2 by 0.1m and is a massive construction, measuring 1-1.3m across. Unit 10's basal stones protrude 0.12-0.37m west from the vertical line of the upper rocks.

A wall roughly 0.65m high was seemingly raised atop U.2 during this span (also glossed as U.2). This construction links the Str. 35-2nd platform to Str. 35-1st's summit and caused no end of confusion during excavation. Our best interpretation at present is that this augmentation of U.2 marks the southern limit of Str. 35-1st's summit and the northern margin of a 0.25-0.3m high-terrace that incorporates all known Str. 35-2nd architecture. The U.4 pavement atop Str. 35-2nd's platform, therefore, would have been exposed as part of this construction. The surface-level room adjoining said platform on the east during TS.2 is now filled in with U.14 (a very fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, tan soil containing large quantities of cultural material; essentially indistinguishable from underlying S.3). This modification extends the terrace out to U.3. The newly created portion on the terrace is partly capped with a 0.1m-thick lens composed primarily of disintegrating bajareque fragments (F.1) that extends west 1.75m from U.3. Feature 1 is most likely composed of the remnants from a perishable construction raised atop the TS.3 terrace, its stratigraphic position marking the original level of the earthen terrace summit. Unit 11, in this scenario, now served as the terrace's southern step-up, thereby accounting for its continued low height (ca. 0.25m) throughout TS.3. The Str. 35-2nd platform's eastern, northern, and western facings were buried by these modifications. The end result was the creation of a building with a very narrow summit (1.02-1.2m across) and an extensive southern terrace (2.4x2.75m). Structure 33-1st's western steps (U.6 and 29) face

directly towards the southern terrace, implying that the former's occupants had easy access to the latter space.

Unit 12 may be the southern continuation of U.10, though the two constructions are not precisely aligned nor was their linkage confirmed by excavation. Unit 13, a 0.65m-high cobble wall running northwest-southeast, lies 1.8m south of the southernmost exposed point on U.12. Unit 13 is well beyond Str. 35-1st's limits and was probably raised in an effort to close off the patio's western flank. Desire to ensure privacy may be one reason why U.10, 12, and 13 were raised to their relatively great heights.

By the conclusion of TS.3, Str. 35-1st was a 1.08m-high platform the narrow earthen-floored summit (1.02-1.2m across) of which was bounded on the south by a 0.25-0.3m high terrace encompassing 2.4x2.75. The latter consists of modified elements of Str. 35-2nd. Structure 35-1st measures 4.9x6.8m and is aligned very approximately 261 degrees. A series of three stone-faced and -surfaced terraces ascends the northern flank. A low step located at the approximate center of the terrace system suggests that it was from this side that the summit was reached. At least two terraces mount the building's eastern flank while a vertical ascent standing 0.65m high separates the platform summit from the southern terrace. We do not know how the platform's western side was faced, though a 0.56-0.65m-high wall seals off the western side of the southern terrace and may have continued southward to link up with unexcavated Str. 34. There was no such obstruction to accessing the southern terrace's east side where passage between adjacent Strs. 33-1st and 35-1st was facilitated by steps on the former's western face and the terrace's low height. All walls are built primarily of unmodified river cobbles the naturally flatter aspects of which are oriented outwards. Cut blocks are concentrated in the area of the putative northern stairs (the western exposed 1.15m of U.5-7) where they comprise most of the surviving top courses of these risers. As was the case with Str. 33-1st, masonry was apparently used to mark points of formal access to the building. Chinking stones were used to fill in the gaps among the larger rocks and a brown mud mortar was used as a binding agent in all walls. Large rocks are generally set in horizontal courses in all facings save for the upward extension of U.2 where such careful placement of stones is absent.

#### Time Span 4

After Str. 35-1st's abandonment, the building was largely covered by the deposition of S.4 and 6-9. The former resumed accumulation on the edifice's western flank, eventually reaching a maximum thickness of 0.41m above S.1 (see TS.1 for a description of this layer). On the north, basal construction is covered by S.6, a moderately coarse-textured, hard-compacted, tan-to-brown-colored soil distinguished by the high density of artifacts (primarily pottery sherds) and small stones found within it. Stratum 6 slopes down from the top of U.6, dropping 0.3m across 1.04m south-to-north. Stratum 7, a moderately coarse-textured, hard-compacted tan soil, blankets the southern terrace by 0.02-0.33m. This layer is essentially the western continuation of S.10 described in TS.7 for neighboring Str. 35-1st. Overlying these soils and all but the tops of the highest uncovered architecture are S.8 and 9. These coarse-textured, moderately hard-compacted soils are distinguished by overlying S.9's slightly darker brown color and greater concentration of small roots. Both S.8 and 9 contain sizable quantities of pebbles 0.01m or less in diameter. Embedded within these strata are the tumbled remains of final-phase architecture (F.2). Feature 2 is a moderately dense concentration of displaced rocks that was traced for 0.84m, 0.4m, and 1m north of Str. 35-1st and 1.86m west of U.13.

## Structure 32-Sub1

Structure 32-Sub1 lay undetected from the surface in the approximate center of the Op. 32 patio, 6.75m south of Str. 33-1st and 11m southwest of Str. 35-1st. The terrain in Str. 32-Sub1's immediate environs descends 0.04m across 4m north-to-south and rises 0.29m over 6.75m east-to-west. The Quebrada Danta truncates the building on the south. The approximately 14.85m<sup>2</sup> excavated within Subop. 32M revealed the preserved length of the edifice's eastern basal wall along with the entire extent of its northern facing. Digging was carried to maximum depths of 1.17m and 1.18m beneath modern ground surface outside and into construction, respectively, revealing a single building phase punctuated by at least one major renovation.

### Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	-	-	S.1,2	-	LCLI, LCLII
2	Str. 32-Sub1-1st	U.1-3	-	-	LCLII/III?
3	Str. 32-Sub1-1st	U.4,5	S.3?	-	LCLII/III, LCLIII, EPC
4	-	-	S.4-6	F.1	-

### Time Span 1

Stratum 1, a coarse-textured, moderately soft-compacted, dark brown soil containing large quantities of pebbles, measuring 0.01m or less in diameter, was exposed to a maximum thickness of only 0.04m in the base of excavation (its full depth is unknown). This layer is 0.14m below Str. 32-Sub1-1st architecture (U.2) and slopes up 0.04m over 0.57m west-to-east. Burying S.1 is a fine-textured, hard-compacted, tan soil (S.2). Stratum 2, which buries the lower 0.1m of Str. 32-Sub1-1st construction (U.1 and 2), contains a fairly high density of small to large cobbles. These stones may represent architectural debris fallen from an undetected building lying between Strs. 32-Sub1-1st and Str. 35-1st.

### Time Span 2

Structure 32-Sub1-1st is a 0.2m-high platform (above S.2) faced on the east, north, and west by vertical facings (U.1 and 2) that rise directly to the stone-paved summit (U.3). Limited clearing of the latter area (ca. 1m in from the edges of U.1 and 2) failed to reveal any signs of superstructure construction. Units 1 and 2 are built primarily of unmodified river cobbles the naturally flatter aspects of which are directed outwards. Cut blocks are also found in both

entities, invariably concentrated at the surviving corners (northwest and northeast). The U.3 pavement is made up of unmodified river cobbles. A tan mud mortar was used as a binding agent in U.1-3. Both U.1 and 2 seem to consist of a single horizontal course of larger rocks (0.06x0.15m to 0.17x0.62m, most falling towards the center if that continuum) around and under which are packed chinking stones.

Overall, Str. 32-Sub1-1st is a 0.2m-high stone-faced and -surfaced platform that measures 2.82m (minimally) by 3.64m and is aligned roughly 260 degrees. Structure 32-Sub1-1st is at a depth equivalent to that of Str. 33-1st's southern terrace, suggesting that the two edifices were exposed and in use at about the same time.

### Time Span 3

During this interval, Str. 32-Sub1-1st was expanded both in height and lateral extent. Unit 4, a 0.68m-high by 0.52m-wide cobble wall defines the western limits of the addition. The 1.66m intervening between U.2's northwest corner and U.4 is filled with small to large cobbles (0.04-0.1m to 0.2x0.26m) set in a tan soil matrix (U.5). Unit 5's base is more-or-less equivalent to that of U.2, but the former rises 0.54m above U.3, the platform's summit floor during TS.2. This ascent may have occurred in steps, with an initial (eastern) riser 0.21m tall by 0.64m wide giving way to a 0.33m-high step that runs west 1.02m to U.4. *If* such steps existed, their eastern facings had long since succumbed to the deleterious effects of erosion prior to excavation. Construction of U.4 and 5, whatever their ultimate forms, essentially converted the TS.2 platform into a 3.64m-wide, stone-paved terrace above which rose a 1.66m-wide stone-faced eminence on the west. In both Strs. 32-Sub1-1st and 35-1st, therefore, earlier architecture was apparently preserved as terraces fronting later, relatively narrow, elevated summits.

Stratum 3, a fine-textured, hard-compacted, yellow-tan soil containing some bajareque fragments, covers U.4's western face up to a point 0.21m below its preserved top. The place of S.3 within Str. 32-Sub1's occupation sequence is unclear. It may represent soil laid down immediately following the building's abandonment when the platform's western face was no longer being maintained. Alternatively, S.3 might be fill introduced during a late, western expansion of the platform. In the second case, S.3 would have backed a facing that lies beyond the western limits of excavation. The increasing density of stones, including at least one large cobble, noted 0.45m west of U.4 may indicate the presence of such a construction. The similarity of S.3 to the soil in which U.5 stones are embedded and its contrast with the earth blanketing Str. 32-Sub1-1st to the east very tentatively supports the second interpretation.

By the conclusion of TS.3, Str. 32-Sub1-1st consisted of a 0.2m-high stone-paved terrace covering 2.82m (minimally) by 3.64m that was backed on the west by a 1.66m-wide rock-filled eminence rising 0.54m above said terrace. The ascent to Str. 32-Sub1-1st's summit may have been made in two stages; an initial eastern step 0.21m high by 0.64m across giving way to a 0.33m-tall step-up to the 1.02m-wide summit. The building now measures 5.85m east-west (the north-south dimension of the western addition was not ascertained) and is oriented approximately 260 degrees (the terrace) to 8 degrees (the addition). At least one faced block was found in the U.5 fill. Otherwise, U.4 and 5 are composed of unmodified river-worn stones set in a tan soil matrix. The naturally flatter aspects of the rocks used to make U.4 are directed out to the west. Larger stones in U.4 are placed in four horizontal courses packed round with chinking stones.

Late in Str. 32-Sub1-1st's history of use, the building may have been expanded further to

the west, a tan soil fill obscuring all but the uppermost 0.21m of the U.4 facing. This renovation, if it occurred, would have increased the building's east-west dimension by at least 0.45m.

Time Span 4

After abandonment, Str. 32-Sub1-1st was covered on the east up to U.4 by a very coarse-textured, moderately soft-compacted, brown soil containing many pebbles 0.02m or less in diameter (S.4). Stratum 4 pinches out against U.4 on the west and expands gradually eastward, eventually covering U.3 by 0.3-0.4m. Stratum 4 buries S.2 by 0.46m immediately north of Str. 32-Sub1-1st. There is no sign of S.4 west of U.4, above S.3. Blanketing S.4 and 3 is S.5 and 6, a coarse-textured, hard-compacted earth distinguished solely by overlying S.6's darker brown color and greater profusion of small roots. Together, S.5 and 6 cover S.4 by 0.29-0.45m. Embedded within S.4-6 is a dense to moderately dense concentration of stones displaced from final-phase architecture (F.1). Feature 1 is densest north of Str. 32-Sub1-1st, where it extends for at least 1.15m beyond the platform, somewhat fewer stones being found for minimally 0.7m west of U.4. The F.1 rocks north of U.2 extend for at least 0.25m above the top of that wall; perhaps not all of F.1 derives from Str. 32-Sub1-1<sup>st</sup>. Some may have fallen from another surface-invisible building lying north of the platform described here.

Test Pit

Suboperation 32N is a 1x1.85m test trench dug in the Quebrada Danta below Op. 32. The purpose of the excavation was to try and link natural processes occurring within this seasonal stream course with cultural activities transpiring at Op. 32. Digging here continued to a maximum depth of 0.63m below modern ground surface revealing a sequence of 4 distinct earth levels. All work in Subop. 32N was directed by L. Collins during the 1990 field season.

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	-	-	S.1	-	
2	-	-	S.2	-	
3	-	-	S.3, 4	-	

Time Span 1

The earliest activity revealed in the course of digging within Subop. 32N was the deposition of a hard-compacted, coarse-textured, light tan soil (S.1). Stratum 1 was revealed to a maximum thickness of 0.15m (its base lies beyond excavation limits) and it maintained a more-or-less even upper surface over the 1.04m it was traced south-to-north. A few artifacts, mostly pottery sherds, were found included in S.1.



## Time Span 2

Stratum 1 was blanketed by 0.1-0.2m of a fine-textured, loosely compacted, brown soil that contains both pottery fragments and pieces of shell (S.2). Stratum 2 ascends 0.29m over the 1.85m it was traced from east-to-west.

## Time Span 3

Stratum 2 was, in turn, covered by 0.2-0.32m of a coarse-textured, hard-compacted, brown soil that, like its predecessor, contains both artifacts and shells (S.3). Stratum 3 drops 0.07m across 0.35m from its easternmost exposed edge moving westward before rising 0.21m over the remaining 1.4m it was traced in Subop. 32N. Stratum 4, which resembles S.3 in all respects save for its darker brown hue, accumulated to as much as 0.18m atop S.3 and marks the end of this depositional sequence.

## Chronological Summary

Ceramics diagnostic of the Middle Preclassic were found mixed with numerically predominant later materials in and around Str. 35. These finds point to the existence of human settlement near the Op. 32 patio during the aforementioned period, though no architecture or pure deposits assignable to the phase were identified. Evidence of Late Classic I occupation is more widespread, pottery fragments datable to this interval being found on or near all three investigated edifices. As was the case for Middle Preclassic markers, however, Late Classic I items are invariably minority components within lots composed primarily of Late Classic II and subsequent remains. No uncovered architecture pertains to this span.

Late Classic II settlement is more robustly represented in Op. 32, especially within the sequence of earth levels and early constructions (Strs. 32-Sub2-1st and 32-Sub3-1st) revealed off Str. 33's eastern flank. The above buildings were apparently surface-level constructions whose perimeters were defined by low stone foundations. A Late Classic II presence is also tentatively suggested for Str. 32-Sub1's environs. No clear signs of pure Late Classic II occupation are attested to in or near Str. 35, though deeper digging here might have revealed a westward continuation of the settlement revealed east of Str. 33. All investigated portions of Op. 32 were occupied during Late Classic II/III, a period that also witnessed the raising of substantial stone-faced platforms (Strs. 33-1st, 35-2nd, 35-1st, and Sub1-1st). Use of these buildings continued, seemingly unabated, through Late Classic III. In fact, some of the renovations identified on Strs. 33-1st, 35-1st, and 32-Sub1-1st may well have been made at this time. Early Postclassic habitation is suggested by finds of a few pottery sherds diagnostic of the period on all three studied edifices. The relative paucity of these late remains hint at a dwindling population. No signs of late Postclassic or Early Historic use of Op. 32 were unearthed.

Operation 32, therefore, seems to have been occupied for a protracted period, beginning as early as the Middle Preclassic. Relatively slight and, possibly, sporadic occupation of the area continued through Late Classic I. Late Classic II sees intensified occupation and erection of the first recognized, albeit fairly modest, structures. Both population and construction activity peaked in Late Classic II/III-III, both dropping off during the Early Postclassic. By the final prehistoric centuries, Op. 32 was abandoned.