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## PVN OP 024 Excavation Report

Edward M. Schortman  
*Kenyon College*

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## Operation 24

Operation 24 encompasses 4 monumental constructions (Strs. 1A-38, 1A-40, 1A-42, and 1A-43) which roughly continue the line of buildings that define the north side of the La Sierra site core east of Str. 1A-19. Approximately 3600m<sup>2</sup> are included in Op. 24. Structure 1A-38, the westernmost of the Op. 24 edifices, was investigated over the course of two months in 1988 and is the only edifice in this operation that has been excavated. Patricia Reed and Patricia Whooley supervised these investigations during which ca. 88m<sup>2</sup> were cleared.

### Structure 1A-38

Structure 1A-38 is the westernmost building in the line of 4 monumental edifices that run roughly east-west and comprise Op. 24. Structure 1A-11, the platform on the eastern edge of Op. 26, is 1m to the west while Str. 1A-40, Str. 1A-38's nearest neighbor to the east, is 9m in that direction. Excavations on and around Str. 1A-38 exposed roughly 88m<sup>2</sup> within Subop. 24A-E, uncovering nearly all of the platform's summit and limited portions of each of its basal flanks. Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 2.06m and 2.2m below modern ground surface beyond and within architecture, respectively. One major construction phase was recorded in the course of this work which spanned two months during 1988 and was directed by Patricia Whooley and Patricia Reed.

### Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	-	-	S.8-13	-	?
2	Str. 1A-38-Sub1	U.22	-	-	LCL II?
3	-	-	S.3, 5-7	-	LCL II?
4	Str. 1A-38-1st	U.1-21, 23-38, 44, 51	-	-	LCL III/II?
5	Str. 1A-38-1st	U.38-43, 45-50, 52-55	S.3, 4,14	-	LCL III
6	Str. 1A-38-1st	-	-	F.2	LCL III?
7	-	-	S.1-3	F.1	-

### Time Span 1

Signs of activities that transpired during this interval were recorded solely off the northwest flank of Str. 1A-38-1st. The first of these events was the deposition of S.13, a fine-textured, loosely consolidated orange-gray sand. Stratum 13 was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.14m at the northwestern margin of excavations and slopes down 0.14m over 0.6m northwest-to-southeast (its base was not encountered). Stratum 12, a 0.02m-thick, dark black sand, caps S.13 and conforms to its northwest-southeast downward slope. Blanketing S.12 by 0.02-0.1m is a coarse-textured, loosely compacted, tan to gray sand (S.11). Like its predecessors, S.11 also drops down northwest-to-southeast, declining 0.28m over 0.64m in that direction. Together, S.11-13 seem to define the northwest flank of a declivity in which S.8-10 accumulated. The lowest of these in-filling layers, S.10, is at least 0.2m thick (its base was not found) and identical to S.13 but separated from it by the intervening S.11 and 12. Stratum 10 runs more-or-less level northwest-southeast, pinching out against S.11 on the northwest and disappearing into the excavation limits beneath U.22 (see TS.2, below) on the southeast. Capping S.10 by 0.02-0.12m is a fine-textured, hard-compacted, gray clay (S.9). A lens of S.9, as much as 0.05m thick, branches off from the main body of the layer on the southeast and extends 1.04m into S.10 on the northwest. This interdigitation of S.9 and 10 implies that they were laid down over the same period under fluctuating depositional regimes. Stratum 8, an 0.08-0.14m thick layer of loosely consolidated, fine-textured, orange-gray sand, overlies S.9 and maintains roughly the same level over its exposed 2.14m northwest-southeast extent. This layer is indistinguishable from S.10 and 13.

This early depositional sequence suggests that the conditions in which the aforementioned soils formed fluctuated throughout TS.1. Those processes that resulted in the introduction of the orange-gray sand noted in S.8, 10, and 13 recurred fairly regularly, interrupted by events that introduced other sands (S.11 and 12) and clay lenses (S.9). Also during this interval a depression of uncertain dimensions, delimited by S.11-13 on the northwest, formed and was filled in. There is no reason at this point to see these processes as anything but natural in origin, possibly related to floods of the nearby stream which is currently seasonal.

### Time Span 2

This sequence of depositional events was interrupted by the construction of Str. 1A-38-Sub1. The only portion of the aforesaid edifice uncovered in our excavations is U.22. This construction is a cobble wall that stands 0.42m high, measures 0.76m across, and is aligned roughly 221 degrees over the 1m northeast-southwest it was exposed northwest of Str. 1A-38-1st. Unit 22 is fronted on the northwest by a stone step-out that projects 0.27m northwest from its base and is sunk 0.1m into S.8 (0.07m of this entity rises above S.8). It is unclear whether U.22 is part of a stone foundation delimiting the northwest perimeter of a surface-level construction or the northwest facing for a low platform. Its considerable girth suggests the latter interpretation.

### Time Span 3

Following Str. 1A-38-Sub1's abandonment, U.22 was covered by the deposition of S.5, a 0.46-0.76m-thick layer of moderately coarse-textured, hard-compacted, orange soil. A lens of fine-textured, hard-compacted, gray clay (S.7), projects 1.93m from the northwest into S.5 at its base and blankets S.8 by 0.1-0.12m. Directly overlying S.7 is a coarse-textured, soft-

compacted, tan to gray sand (S.6) that is as much as 0.12m thick and pinches out atop S.7, 1.15m southeast from where it enters the excavations on the northwest. Both S.6 and 7 continue beyond excavation limits to the northwest. It is hard to say at this point whether S.5-7 were introduced by natural or cultural means.

It is difficult to determine the temporal placement of S.3, a fine-textured, hard-compacted, tan soil. On the southwest it underlies TS.4 construction by at least 0.11m (its base was not encountered) and so must belong in TS.3. Northwest of the platform, however, an identical soil (also labeled S.3) was apparently laid down near the beginning of TS.5 when it served as the ground surface above which architecture dated to that interval was raised (see below). It may be that the construction of Str. 1A-38-1st in TS. 4 interrupted the deposition of S.3, a process that resumed during what was likely a fairly short period of time between TS. 4 and 5.

#### Time Span 4

Structure 1A-38-1st reached near to its final form during this interval. On the northwest, four terraces lead up to the summit. The basal member of this set, U.21, rises 0.3m above S.5, 0.39m of this element protruding below the top of S.5. Unit 21 is 0.49m wide and surfaced with stone. Unit 23, the next ascending riser, stands 0.9m above U.21 and its stone-surfaced tread extends 0.66m to the southeast where it is succeeded by U.24. The latter is 0.55m tall by 0.46m wide, surfaced with stones, and gives way to the fourth terrace, U.51. Unit 51 rises 0.36m above its predecessor, is surfaced with earth and stones, and extends 0.61m to the southeast where it ends in U.20, the northwestern summit wall. Unit 20 is 1.57 m wide, 0.6m tall on the northwest, but was traced down for 2.34m on the southeast before excavations stopped without locating its base. Unit 20's southeastern descent is broken by three step-outs; one 0.43m below the preserved top projects 0.21m to the southeast and the second is 1.49m below the top and juts out 0.15m from the body of the wall.

On the platform's southeast flank, seven stone-faced terraces proceed to the summit facing. The lowest of this sequence, U.11, rises 0.16m above a stone floor (U.44). Unit 44 runs at least 0.52m to the southeast at which point it left our excavations. This pavement extended only 0.8m from the southwest edge of the trench and did not continue across the excavation's full 1m width southwest-northeast. Unit 11 is distinctive among Str. 1A-38-1st constructions in that it is made of cut blocks set on end. It is backed by a cobble pavement that is 1.09m wide and level with the top of U.11. Unit 12, the next ascending terrace, rises to its full height of 0.68m in two stages; a basal step out 0.18m high projects 0.15m to the southeast and is surmounted by a 0.5m tall vertical ascent. Unit 13 is 0.29m to the northwest and rises 0.53m above U.12. The narrow U.12 tread is paved with stones while the 0.93m-wide surface of U.13 is heavily disturbed; it seems to have been surfaced with a combination of stones and earth. Unit 14 towers 0.29m above U.13, its 0.82m-wide stone-paved tread giving way to U.15 on the northwest. The latter is 0.25m high by 0.8m across, faced and surfaced with stones, and succeeded by U.16. Unit 16 rises 0.27m above U.15 and measures 0.64m across, giving way to U.17 which, in turn, is 0.14m high by 0.44m wide. The treads of both U.16 and 17 are paved with stones. Unit 18, the southeast summit wall, ascends 0.26m above U.17, is 0.5m across, and is capped, at least in its center, by cut blocks. No effort was made to find the base of U.18. This segment of the southeast summit wall seems to have been treated as an entry feature, giving way to a stone pavement (U.7) that extends 1.74m northwest onto the summit and ends at U.19.

The latter rises 0.39m above U.7 and is 0.89m wide; U.18, the southeast summit step-up, stands 0.07m above U.7. Unit 7 is bounded by two benches, one each on the southwest and northeast (U.8 and 6, see below). Except for the two relatively high and steep lower terraces (U.12 and 13), the risers on Str. 1A-38-1st's southeast flank seem to have provided access to a formal entryway in the approximate center of the platform's summit.

Three stone-faced terraces mount the northeast flank. The basal element, U.1, is an estimated 1.2m high by 1.27m wide (preservation is poor on this side and the locations and dimensions of construction units are inferred from their fragmentary remains). Unit 2, the next ascending terrace, is 0.55m high by 0.8m across and is succeeded by U.3. The latter is 0.26m tall and runs back 0.55m to the southwest to U.4, the summit wall on this flank. Unit 4 looms 0.87m above U.3, measures 0.88m across, and plunges to an exposed depth of 2.14m on the southwest. As with U.20, the northwest summit facing, U.4 does not descend in a single, steep drop. There is a 0.18m-wide step-out to the southwest 0.64m below the extant top of U.4. From that point downward U.4 slants out to the southwest, expanding 0.47m over a drop of 1.5m. Unit 4's base was not located as excavation into the loosely consolidated fill (U.35) retained by this construction could not proceed to greater depths with safety.

The basal southwest terrace, U.25, stands ca. 0.5m high, though its poor state of preservation precludes offering more than an estimate of its dimensions. The next ascending terrace to the northeast was not uncovered. A wall, U.26, made using a mix of cut blocks and cobbles set on end, intersects U.25 on the west and was traced for 1.4m running at an orientation of ca. 272 degrees. Unit 26 is roughly 0.15m high and may have extended the short distance westward to join with Str. 1A-11. The southwest summit wall, U.10, is at least 0.44m wide and stands an estimated 0.8m above the presumed earthen summit floor. Time did not permit further examination of this construction.

Structure 1A-38-1st's summit in TS. 4 seems to have consisted of one large room encompassing 49.4m<sup>2</sup>. The enclosure was apparently entered from the southeast where a 0.74m-wide stone floor (U.7) runs 1.74m from U.18, the southeast summit wall, to a 0.39m-high by 0.89m-wide wall (U.19). Flanking the U.7 floor on the northeast and southwest are two stone-faced and -surfaced benches (U.6 and 8). Unit 6, on the northeast, rises 0.47m above U.7, measures 0.98m across northeast-southwest, and is 2.5m long northwest-southeast. Its southwestern analog, U.8, is 0.38m high, 2.08m northeast-southwest by 2.5m northwest-southeast. The rest of the superstructure is an earthen-floored room that wraps around the entry feature and its associated benches on the northeast, northwest, and southwest. The southeast side of the room is bounded by U.5 and 9. Unit 5 runs northeast of the U.6 bench and stands an estimated 0.36m above the reconstructed level of the earthen summit floor, rising to its full height in two stages. The top 0.08m gives way to a 0.12-0.4m wide step-out to the northwest below which U.5 drops the remaining 0.26m to the floor in a single vertical descent. Unit 9, extending southwest of the U.8 bench, rises approximately 0.4m above the summit surface in one ascent. Unit 5 extends 0.2-0.53m below the putative summit floor while U.9 projects no more than 0.12m beneath that level. It is unclear why the bases of these walls are so variable in depth, though, overall, U.5 runs deeper than U.9. The northeast, northwest, and southwest sides of the summit are delimited by U.4, 20, and 10, respectively.

Unit 30, is a 0.09-0.45m high, casually built stone wall that runs 2.3m, roughly northwest-southeast across the summit. This construction lies below TS.4 construction (0.34m below U.9), is covered by later fill (U.35 and 36), and may belong to an earlier phase of construction that was not revealed in other deep probes into the summit. The wall's uneven

height and general lack of coherence, however, suggest that it was not meant to stand alone; possibly it was a fill retaining unit.

The fill making up Str. 1A-38-1st's hearting consists of two earth levels in which were found very few cobbles. The lowest, U.35, is a coarse-textured, very loosely consolidated, tan sand with many small pebbles, ca. 1cm or less in diameter. This earth fill was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.85m, though its base was not encountered. Capping U.35 is a soil identical to its antecedent save for its being very hard compacted (U.36). Unit 36 is as much as 0.72m thick and was used as mortar in the walls that make up Str. 1A-38-1st's superstructure. Unit 30 is covered by U.35 and 36.

By the end of TS.4, Str. 1A-38-1st was an earth-filled, stone-faced platform that stood 2.5m high, measured 13.7x19.75m, and was aligned roughly 46 degrees. The building rises above unprepared earthen floors on all sides save the southeast. Here a stone pavement projects at least 0.52m into the plaza though it does not seem to have been continuous across the entire southeast side of the edifice. Seven, four, and three stone-faced terraces ascend the southeast, northwest, and northeast flanks of the platform; the southwest side was not sufficiently cleared to reconstruct its form. Terraces on the northwest are consistently narrow, measuring 0.46-0.66m across, while those on the southeast and northeast generally fall within this range save for one tread in each case which is considerably broader (1.09m on the southeast and 1.27m on the northeast). In both cases it is the basal terrace that is widest. Access to the summit was apparently achieved by passing up the southeast flank where the generally low risers (0.16-0.68m high) lead to a paved entryway that runs from the summit step-up for a distance of 1.74m northwest into the superstructure where it ends at a 0.39m-high by 0.89m-wide stone wall. Flanking that pavement are two stone-faced and -surfaced benches; the northeast example is 0.47m high and measures 0.98x2.5m while its southwestern counterpart is lower (0.38m tall) but more extensive (2.08x2.5m). The remainder of the superstructure consists of an ample, earthen-floored room that takes the form of a "C" wrapped around the central entry complex of paved floor and bordering benches. Overall, this space covers 39.6m<sup>2</sup>, excluding the entry feature and benches, 49.4m<sup>2</sup> with them included. A construction that may antedate TS. 4 architecture was located buried within the platform's hearting in the southwest portion of the summit. This low, casually fashioned stone wall may be part of a fill retaining unit or a partially dismantled version of earlier superstructure architecture. All walls were built of river cobbles save the basal southeastern terrace, which is made of masonry blocks set on end, and the southeastern summit step-up which is capped by cut stones, at least where it fronts the entryway.

### Time Span 5

This span witnessed the expansion of Str. 1A-38-1st's basal platform on all sides save the southeast where the terrace system described above was preserved. The summit was also raised and considerably modified through subdivision of its space into several enclosures of markedly varying sizes.

On the northwest, the first activity attested to in our excavations was the deposition of S.4, a 0.17m-thick (maximally) layer of gray, ashy soil, atop S.5. Stratum 4 is a lens that extends for 2.11m northwest-southeast and pinches out at either end. Stratum 3, a fine-textured, hard-compacted, tan soil covers S.4 and the still-exposed segment of S.5 on the northwest by 0.1-0.22m. The terraces added to Str. 1A-38-1st's northwest flank were set into this layer, the basal riser (U.40) projecting 0.19m below S.3's top. The four terraces appended to Str. 1A-38-

1st's northwest side are set atop a fill composed of densely packed small to large cobbles resting within a fine-textured, hard-compacted soil that trends from brown to tan with increasing depth (U.52). Unit 52 is as much as 1.26m thick on its upslope (southeast) side and buries all but the highest terrace (U.51) and the northwest summit wall (U.20) of the platform's earlier version. The terraces themselves were barely discernible during excavation, making the following estimates of their dimensions tentative at best. The lowest of the set, U.40, rises 0.45m above S.3 and measures 0.57m across. Its successor, U.41, is 0.16m high by 0.66m across and gives way to U.42. The latter ascends 0.14m above U.41 and is 0.55m wide. Unit 43, the uppermost preserved riser, is 0.33m tall and extends back to the southeast at least 1.1m. Above this point, though the U.52 fill can be seen packed against the face of the earlier U.24 terrace face, no sign of any construction surmounting this hearting could be discerned. At least one more terrace would be needed to span the gap between U.43 and what we believe was the still-visible U.51 riser. Should this be the case, then six terraces mounted Str. 1A-38-1st's northwest flank during TS. 5.

Turning to the northeast we find a similar situation, even to the point that poor preservation hampers efforts to reconstruct architectural form. Here, S.14, a moderately coarse-textured, hard-compacted, tan soil, was laid down near the beginning of this interval. Stratum 14 slopes up 0.34m across 2.06m northeast-to-southwest where it buries the lower 0.26m of the new northeast basal terrace (U.47). Unit 47 has an estimated height of 0.8m above S.3, thus leaving 0.14m of the former northeast basal terrace, U.1, still exposed. This may have been the case, though we cannot rule out the possibility that U.47 originally covered U.1 but has lost its uppermost stones to erosion. Unit 48, a ca. 0.42m-high riser, is set atop U.1, 0.74m back to the southwest from U.1's northeast edge. This riser measures 0.54m across, burying all but the top-most 0.14m of U.2, the second ascending terrace in the TS.4 terrace sequence. Underlying U.47 and 48 is a fill composed of small and large cobbles set in a moderately coarse-textured, hard-compacted soil that grades from brown to tan with increasing depth (U.53). Though U.53 is exposed in two discontinuous segments beneath U.47 and 48 it is given the same designation because of close similarities in composition and the strong likelihood that these terraces and their heartings were built at about the same time. Unit 3 does not seem to have been covered over during this interval nor was U.4's northeast side obscured by construction now. *If* the above interpretations are close to correct, then Str. 1A-38-1st's northeast side was ascended by five terraces below the U.4 summit wall in TS.5.

The situation on the southwest side is breathtakingly ambiguous. Here, the former basal terrace (U.25) and the wall running west of it (U.26) are covered by small to large cobbles set in a moderately coarse- to fine-textured, hard-compacted soil that shades from brown to tan with increasing depth (U.54). What capped this hearting is abundantly unclear. Patterning in the rocks tentatively suggests that there are at least two terraces represented here; a basal riser 0.69m high by 0.55m wide (U.38) and a second ascending terrace that rises 0.51m above U.38 and runs back to the northeast at least 1.51m (U.39). The northeast end of the putative U.39 was not identified. Further work on this side of Str. 1A-38-1st was not pursued so we cannot tell how many terraces ascended this southwest flank during TS.5 and whether the southwest summit wall, U.10, was obscured by late additions.

On the southeast the situation is very different. Here as much as 0.88m of S.3, a fine-textured, hard-compacted, tan soil, blanketed the extramural stone floor (U.44), basal terrace (U.11), and all but the uppermost 0.1m of the next ascending terrace (U.12). Stratum 3 slopes down 0.14m over the 1.79m it was exposed running from southeast to northwest. It is unclear

whether S.3 accumulated during TS.5, as seems to have been the case off the edifice's northwest flank, or was introduced during the subsequent period following abandonment (TS.7). The relatively poor state of preservation evinced by U.12 implies that it stood exposed for some time before being covered by S.3. If this is the case, it seems likely that this terrace remained unprotected by a blanketing of soil until late in its history, possibly until TS.7. If so, then Str. 1A-38-1st's southeast side was unmodified during TS.5.

The summit was filled with ca. 0.25m of earth (U.34, a moderately coarse-textured, dark brown soil) that covered the entire surface save for the paved entrance on the southeast which seemingly stayed open. As the earth fill introduced now rose to the top of U.5 and 9, stones were added to these constructions so that they still stood 0.31m (U.46 atop U.5) and 0.47m (U.55 atop U.9) above the newly elevated earthen summit floor. Whereas U.55 is flush with U.9's northwest face, U.46 is set back 0.5m southeast of U.5's northwest line. The U.6 and 8 benches that flank the southeast entryway would still have been visible by this point, projecting 0.22m and 0.13m, respectively, above the fill. Extending the line of the northwest faces of U.6 and 8 to the southwest and northeast are two casually fashioned walls (U.49 and 50, respectively). Unit 49 runs 2.05m southwest from its intersection with U.8 and is 0.16m high by 0.3m wide. Unit 50 extends at least 2.15m northeast from U.6's north corner and is 0.12m high by 0.16m wide; the northeast end of U.50 was not encountered. Units 46 and 50, together with the still-visible portions of U.6 on the southwest and U.4 on the northeast, define a room covering 1x4.65m.

The western summit corner was modified through the construction of three diminutive enclosures (U.27-29) open to the southeast and set in a northeast-southwest line against U.20, the northwest summit wall. The northeastern-most member of this triad, U.27, covers 0.7x0.8m, the central cubicle encompasses 0.75x1m (U.28), and the southwestern example measures 0.4x0.75m (U.29). Though the southeast sides of these enclosures is marked by a shared stone line running northeast-southwest it is unclear whether they were set at floor level or if there was a low step-up from the summit into U.27-29. Running 0.95m southeast from U.28, the central "room," is a 0.2m-high by 0.2m-wide wall (U.31). Unit 31, together with U.49, U.55, and the still-visible portion of U.10 on the southwest, define the limits of an L-shaped summit room. The northwest-southeast-running stem of the "L" covers 0.7x2.9m while the northeast-southwest-trending leg of the figure encompasses 1x3.3m. A 1.4m-wide gap between U.49 and 31 provides entry into the room from the northeast. Both the U.28 and 29 cubicles could have been reached from inside this room.

Two walls were appended to U.20, near its center, during TS. 5. Unit 32, the southwestern of these entities, projects 0.7m southeast from the northwest summit wall and measures 0.1m high by 0.2m wide. Located 1.7m northeast of U.32, U.33 runs 1.1m southeast from U.20, stands 0.13m high, and is 0.2m across. Between them, U.32 and 33 define a space covering at least 0.7x1.7m and open to the southeast where it faces the U.7 entryway. The 3.1m separating U.27 on the southwest from U.32 may have been another similar enclosure, open to the south and covering roughly 0.7m northwest-southeast.

This interval began with the deposition of fine to moderately coarse-textured tan soils on the building's northeast and northwest sides. Whether this accumulation marks a period when the building was no longer being maintained or is the result of human efforts to raise these sides of the edifice is unclear; a similar situation was recorded for Str. 1A-10-1st where a comparable soil was introduced against the structure's north, non-plaza-facing side. By the conclusion of TS.5, Str. 1A-38-1st stood 2.75m high, measured 16m northwest-southeast by 21.6m northeast-southwest, and retained its earlier orientation of 46 degrees. After additions made to the

platform's northwest and northeast flanks, six and five terraces ascended these sides, respectively. At least two newly created risers mount the southwest side though our investigations here were not sufficiently thorough to reveal the full profile of construction on this flank. No changes were apparently made to the southeast, plaza-facing aspect of the platform which was still ascended by seven stone-faced terraces rising above at least a partial stone pavement (U.44). The southeast seems to have remained the side from which the summit was reached, traffic still being channeled through the paved entryway in the approximate center of the superstructure's southeast footing. Otherwise, however, the summit was significantly modified. About 0.25m of earth fill covered the TS. 4 floor. Above this newly renovated surface were a series of low, relatively narrow foundations that subdivided the superstructure's earthen-floored interior into at least eight rooms of markedly different sizes. Passing northwest onto the summit from the U.7 floor the first space encountered is a long (9.5m northeast-southwest), narrow (1.35m northwest-southeast) enclosure (12.8m<sup>2</sup>). An L-shaped compartment bounds this room on the southwest. Built against the summit's south corner, this enclosure covers 5.3m<sup>2</sup>. Bordering this room on the northwest, and set into the summit's west corner, is a series of three adjoining cubicles running southwest-northeast. These diminutive compartments measure 0.3m<sup>2</sup>, 0.75m<sup>2</sup>, and 0.6m<sup>2</sup> from southwest to northeast and are open to the south. Lying immediately to the northeast are two, less formally defined rooms that are also set against the northwest summit wall and have unimpeded access on the southeast. The southwestern of these compartments encompasses 2.2m<sup>2</sup> while its northeast neighbor covers 1.2m<sup>2</sup>. The last two rooms face into the long, narrow northeast-southwest-running compartment. Another enclosure fills the summit's east corner. This space measures 4.65m<sup>2</sup>. The north corner of the summit was not exposed. This area, covering ca. 7.6m<sup>2</sup>, may have contained at least one other room. No new benches were built at this time, though U.6, on the entryway's northeast side, may still have served this function. It now stood 0.22m high while its southwestern counterpart, the U.8 bench, was 0.13m tall. Both retained their original overall dimensions.

### Time Span 6

During this interval parts of Str. 1A-38-1st were blanketed by the deposition of densely packed cobbles set in a brown earth matrix (F.2). Feature 2 covers U.16-18, the two upper terraces and summit step-up on the southeast side and the terraces added to the southwest flank in TS. 5 (U.38 and 39). As with other cases in the site core where a cobble fill overlies late construction, F.2 may have been intended as fill to support additions that were never completed or to obscure, in this case, portions of final-phase architecture in preparation for abandoning the building. Feature 2 is distinguished from later architectural collapse by the horizontal attitude of most of its component rocks while it is separated from TS. 5 construction by the lack of clear facings that overlie and retain it.

### Time Span 7

After Str. 1A-38-1st was abandoned, deposition of S.3 resumed. Intriguingly, this fine-textured, hard-compacted, tan soil is only noted now on the platform's southeast, plaza-facing side where it accumulated to as much as 0.88m above the U.44 floor. Stratum 3 slopes down here 0.14m over 1.79m southeast-to-northwest. Stratum 2, a moderately coarse-textured,

loosely consolidated, dark brown soil, collected to depths of as much as 0.82m over S.3. This layer, in turn, is capped by 0.09-0.15m of S.1, a moderately coarse-textured, loosely compacted, root-rich, dark brown to gray soil. Embedded in S.1, 2, and, on the southeast, S.3 is a moderately dense concentration of stones dislodged from final-phase architecture (F.1). Feature 1 is particularly dense where it overlies architecture and off the building's southwest side. This deposit was traced for 0.9m northeast, 0.13m southeast, 1.14m northwest, and at least 0.9m southwest of final-phase construction.

### Chronological Summary

Relatively few artifacts of any kind, let alone those that are temporally diagnostic, were recovered from excavations at Str. 1A-38. While the stratigraphic sequence revealed for the building, therefore, suggests a long and complex history of use we cannot date with confidence the different phases into which that settlement is divided. All we can offer are our best guesses.

It seems likely that occupation of Str. 1A-38-1st's environs began by at least Late Classic II, if not earlier (Late Classic I diagnostics commonly turn up in small numbers throughout excavations in La Sierra's site core and there is no good reason to think that this area was unoccupied during Late Classic I.). Structure 1A-38-Sub1 was likely raised at some point in this span and covered by Strata 3 and 5-7 later in Late Classic II. Structure 1A-38-1st was clearly in use during Late Classic III, and was probably built either at the end of Late Classic II or the very beginning of Late Classic III. Such a dating brings the main construction episode into line with major building efforts elsewhere in the site core, especially in its eastern portions (see Op. 29). Some segments of Str. 1A-38-1st were covered by a fill composed of stones set in earth towards the end of Late Classic III. No later diagnostics were recovered from the structure, implying that its history of construction and use was compressed within a fairly short interval. As noted earlier, however, the paucity of materials from Op. 24 that were analyzed mandates treating all chronological assignments as tentative.