

Kenyon College

Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange

Four Valleys Archive

Anthropology

1990

PVN OP 037 Excavation Report

Edward M. Schortman
Kenyon College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital.kenyon.edu/honduras>



Part of the [Archaeological Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schortman, Edward M., "PVN OP 037 Excavation Report" (1990). *Four Valleys Archive*. Paper 10390.
<https://digital.kenyon.edu/honduras/10390>

This Excavation Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Anthropology at Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Four Valleys Archive by an authorized administrator of Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact noltj@kenyon.edu.

Kenyon College

Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange

Four Valleys Archive

Anthropology

1990

PVN Op 37 Excavation Report

Edward M. Schortman

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digital.kenyon.edu/honduras>



Part of the [Archaeological Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schortman, Edward M., "PVN Op 37 Excavation Report" (1990). *Four Valleys Archive*. Paper 10390.
<http://digital.kenyon.edu/honduras/10390>

This Excavation Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Anthropology at Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Four Valleys Archive by an authorized administrator of Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact noltj@kenyon.edu.

Operation 37

Operation 37 encompasses approximately 1,750m² occupied by two monumental platforms (Strs. 1A-16 and 1A-17) in the western portion of the La Sierra site core. Segments of Strs. 1A-16 and 1A-17 were dug in Op. 37 during 1990 along with a trench excavated across a low rise that seemed, on the surface, to be a construction linking these two edifices. A total of 96m² was cleared in the course of this work, most of the investigations concentrating on the better-preserved Str. 1A-17. All research in Op. 37 was directed by Steven Yates whose records, along with his 1991 senior honors thesis, form the basis of this account.

Structure 1A-17

Structure 1A-17 is the northern member of a pair of large platforms connected by what was mapped, prior to excavation, as a low construction, or “saddle.” These two edifices together close off the east side of the western plaza of the site core bounded by Strs. 1A12/17. Structure 1A-15 is ca. 14m to the west while Str. 1A-10 is 8m to the north. Structures 1A-16 and 17 are separated by 6m. A trench laid east-west across Str. 1A-17's approximate center revealed a cross-section of the edifice (Subop. 37A). More limited excavations on its north and south flanks (Subop. 37E, 37F, and 37G) were designed to help reconstruct the platform's overall dimension by exposing segments of its basal facings. Fully 47m² was excavated on and around Str. 1A-17. Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 0.85m and 0.9m below modern ground surface outside and into architecture, respectively, revealing two construction phases.

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date(s)</u>
1	Str. 1A-17-2nd	U.1, 3, 11, 16, 18	-	-	LCL II/I
2	-	-	S.1	-	LCL II?
3	Str. 1A-17-1st	U.2, 4-10, 12-15, 17, 19-22	-	-	LCLII/III
4	-	-	S.1	F.1	-

Time Span 1

The earliest activity clearly attested to in the Str. 1A-17 excavations was the laying down of plaster floors on the north and east sides of the platform (U.16 and 1, respectively). Both floors consist of poorly mixed, weakly consolidated limestone fragments set in a matrix of crushed rock of the same material. Units 1 and 16 underlie TS.3 construction and were exposed for distances of 3.5m north-south and 3.2m east-west, respectively; the full extent of these floors

was not revealed. Unit 16, on the north, is 0.2m thick and runs up to and under the base of U.18, the platform's northern basal facing. The latter architectural element stands a preserved 0.86m high and consists of two clear courses, a basal line of medium-size river cobbles surmounted by a layer of cut stone blocks. On the west, it appears that U.11, which continues for an undetermined distance below and behind U.12/14 (see TS.3, below) was U.18's analogue on this flank. Built very much like its northern counterpart, with a lower course of medium-size cobbles supporting an upper layer of cut blocks, this wall is 0.82m wide and stood to a revealed height of 0.74m (U.18's width was not revealed in our excavations). Unit 11 may have originally stood 1.3m high, though its putative lower segment was buried by TS.3 architecture and was not exposed. The situation on the east is even less clear. Here, U.3, an 0.85m-wide wall composed of cobbles, stands an exposed 0.52m high. Like U.11 on the west, U.3 seems to run down behind and below TS.3 architecture (U.2 to the east), though how far this unit may have continued below its lowest revealed point is unclear. If U.3 extended down to the U.1 floor, then it would have stood at least 1.02m high. The absence of cut blocks in the observed portion of U.3 matches a general trend in Str. 1A-17 architecture in which faced stones are concentrated on the northern and western sides of the edifice while constructions on the east were made with unmodified rocks.

By the conclusion of TS.1, it is tentatively suggested that Str. 1A-17-2nd was a stone-faced platform that stood an estimated 1.3m high, measured ca. 16m across east-west, and was aligned roughly 355 degrees. The platform rose above plaster floors that extended 3.2m north and at least 4.96m east of its basal walls; no comparable surface was recorded on the west and the southern flank was not revealed. Nothing of the early superstructure was uncovered and we are uncertain how many, if any, additional terraces may have ascended to the summit.

Time Span 2

Somewhere between 0.15-0.34m of S.1 accumulated atop U.1 on the east during this interval. No comparable soil intervenes between TS.3 architecture and U.16 on the north; U.15, the northern basal terrace, sits directly on top of the plaster floor (U.16). Stratum 1 is a brown, moderately coarse-textured, moderately hard-compacted soil that may have been introduced purposefully to bury U.1 and raise the level of the plaza bordered by Str. 1A-17 on the west (and on the north by Strs. 1A-10 and 1A-11 and, on the east, by Strs. 1A-19). As there is no clear floor associated with this putative fill episode and distinctions between those portions of S.1 laid down in TS.2 and 4 are lacking, we cannot rule out the possibility that S.1 accumulated by natural means. Either it represents a brief hiatus in the use of Str. 1A-17 during which some earth was allowed to collect off the building's east side or all of S.1 dates to TS.4, U.1 remaining exposed throughout Str. 1A-17's use-life. The former interpretation is suggested by the presence of some stones tumbled from final-phase construction (F.1) resting within S.1 and 0.15m above U.1. This stratigraphic relationship implies that the lower portion of S.1 was in place by the time Str. 1A-17-1st had begun to decay soon after the edifice was abandoned.

Time Span 3

It is during this interval that a series of steps or terraces were added to Str. 1A-17's east, west, and north faces and the final phase of summit construction was completed. On the north, U.15 is a 0.15m-high terrace facing that is fashioned of a single course of unmodified cobbles.

Unit 15 projects 4.1m north of the TS.2 basal wall, U.18, and is surfaced with earth. Resting atop this terrace, and 2.8m south of its north facing, is a 0.48m-high step (U.17). Unit 17's riser is a cut block set on end its tread composed of faced stones laid horizontally and extending 1.15m south to intersect U.18's north face. The latter's masonry course projects ca. 0.25m above the U.17 tread, forming yet another step leading towards the summit. An undetermined number of steps and/or terraces fill the unexcavated distance between the top of U.18 and the summit. Units 15 and 17 retain and rest on a fill composed of cobbles set in an earth matrix (included in U.20). The U.16 floor is completely covered by these late additions.

Constructions on the western flank seem to have functioned as a system of steps and terraces leading to the summit. Unit 14, the basal western step, stands an estimated 0.42m above an earth surface. Its riser consists of cut blocks set on end and topped by a tread made from faced stones laid horizontally. That tread extends back (east) 0.36m where it is succeeded by U.13. The latter rests on the U.14 tread, rises 0.2m above it, and measures 0.27m across. Unit 13 is fashioned of masonry blocks laid horizontally. Unit 12 rises 0.17m above U.13 and extends back 0.48m east to where it intersects U.11, the putative western basal wall of Str. 1A-17-2nd. Unit 11 extends 0.51m above U.12's stone tread and seems to have now formed part of the set of narrow steps/terraces that fronted Str. 1A-17-1st's lower west flank. Unit 12, unlike its predecessors, is not made of cut blocks but consists of river cobbles that were shaped to create flat, outward-oriented faces. Unit 11's terrace is 1.02m wide, most of it taken up by the cut blocks that capped the original facing. Excavations north and south of the axial trench suggest that U.11/14 extended at least 10m in that direction. We cannot tell if they ran the full length of Str. 1A-17's west flank, however.

The U.11 surface ends in a stone-faced terrace (U.10) that was preserved to a height of 0.34m. Made primarily of unmodified river cobbles, U.10 may well have stood 0.78m tall thus bringing it to a point equivalent to the base of the next ascending terrace, U.9. The U.10 terrace encompasses 2.19m east-west and was apparently surfaced with earth. Rising 0.35m above that surface is U.9, a 0.4m-wide stone-faced and -surfaced step made of horizontally laid cut blocks resting atop a course of medium-size cobbles. The same construction technique was used to fashion the risers of the next three steps (U.8, 7, and 6). Unit 8, resting atop U.9's tread on the east, ascends 0.34m above its predecessor, is 0.31m wide, and supports the next step, U.7, on its east end. Unit 7 rises 0.3m above U.8, its stone tread measuring 0.48m wide. The uppermost step, U.6, ascends a preserved 0.16m above U.7 and leads directly onto the earthen-floored summit. Unit 6 has suffered significant damage since the building's abandonment and most likely originally stood 0.46m high, bringing its top equal to the reconstructed level of the summit.

The eastern flank is mounted by three stone-faced terraces. The basal riser, U.2, is composed of a course of faced blocks set horizontally and rising an estimated 0.2m high. Unit 2's 1.44m-wide earthen terrace surface ends on the west at U.3, the presumed eastern basal wall of Str. 1A-17-2nd. The visible portions of this earlier construction are made of unmodified cobbles and project at least 0.52m above U.2. In order to bridge the 0.64m between the preserved top of U.3 and the base of the next ascending terrace, U.4, the former may have risen as much as 1.16m above U.2. The U.3 terrace is ca. 2.79m wide and terminates in U.4, a facing that is a preserved 0.8m tall. Unit 4's riser is fashioned using unmodified cobbles and has a basal step-out that projects 0.21m east from the wall's upper vertical face. As was the case with U.3, to bring the top of U.4 to the same level as the base of the next construction element rising to the summit (U.5) requires the addition of 0.44m to U.4's surviving height. This would make

the third ascending terrace 1.24m tall. The 3.14m wide U.4 terrace is surfaced with earth and ends in the 0.62m-high ascent to the summit (U.5). Unit 5 is poorly preserved but was apparently made using unmodified cobbles.

The summit measures 5.8m across east-west and supported at least one L-shaped construction. The western arm of this architectural element (U.21) is a wall fabricated from unmodified cobbles, standing 0.23m tall, running 3.1m north-south, and measuring 0.6-0.9m wide (it narrows from south-to-north). A 0.26m-high wall (U.22) of similar construction interdigitates with U.21's south corner and extends 1.9m to the east, ending at the east edge of the summit (U.5). Unit 22 is 0.35-0.5m wide, narrowing from east-to-west. The significance of the U.21/22 construction is unclear. The two walls may be foundations for an earthen-floored room covering 1.9m east-west by, minimally, 2.7m north-south (the putative enclosure's north end was not encountered). More likely, U.21 and 22 are the west and south segments of an L-shaped bench that overlooked the north and east facing Str. 1A-17-1st.

It is possible that the TS.3 additions were made over a relatively protracted span. Unit 19, a step composed of a course of cut stone blocks resting on a level of small chinking stones, was found buried beneath a northern extension of U.13. Poor preservation of final phase architecture in this area north of the east-west-running axial trench, permitted exposure of this penultimate version of the western steps and it is unclear whether similar earlier versions of visible TS.3 architecture might underlie the latest examples uncovered in our excavations.

Structure 1A-17-1st's fill consists of a moderately dense concentration of medium-size to small cobbles set in a brown earth matrix (U.20).

The exposed portions of Str. 1A-17-1st reveal a stone-faced, earth-and-stone-filled platform that stood 3.26m high, measured 19.04m east-west, and was oriented approximately 355 degrees. The west side was fronted by four low, fairly narrow steps that gave way to a 2.19m-wide, earthen-surfaced terrace above which rose four stone-faced and -surfaced risers leading to the summit. Something of the same sort of construction was recorded in a more limited probe on the building's north side. Here, a low, wide terrace gave way to a set of two risers leading towards the summit. We did not clear above the second ascending riser of this series to determine how the summit was reached in this case. Both the northern and western terrace/steps, however, were generally faced with masonry blocks. This and their narrow widths suggest that Str. 1A-17-1st's summit might have been reached from either of these two sides. The eastern flank, in contrast, is fronted by four usually steep, high, and broad stone-faced ascents that were commonly fashioned using unmodified cobbles (the basal riser, U.2, is the exception here, being both low and made from cut blocks). It is highly unlikely that passage up the east flank was feasible, at least in the limited area exposed in our excavations. The earthen-floored summit encompasses 5.8m across and supported at least one substantial L-shaped construction fashioned from unmodified cobbles. This architectural element may well be a bench standing 0.23-0.26m high with a north-south element extending 3.1m long by 0.6-0.9m across. The east-west running leg of the "L" intersects its north-south trending counterpart at the latter's south end and extends 1.9m east to the summit's eastern margin. This element is 0.35-0.5m wide. Unlike its antecedent, Str. 1A-17-2nd, this version of the building rose above earthen floors on its exposed north, east, and west sides.

Time Span 4

Following abandonment, Str. 1A-17-1st was blanketed by continued deposition of S.1.

Possibly as much 0.84m of this brown soil was deposited now, though, if some of this accumulation occurred in TS. 2, then that depth would be reduced to about 0.5m. Only the uppermost stones of the highest constructions protruded through S.1 onto modern ground surface by the time excavations began. Embedded in S.1 was a moderately dense concentration of stones fallen from final-phase architecture (F.1). Feature 1 was densest where it overlay the building but extended for 1m east and 4.8m west of construction.

Structure 1A-16

Structure 1A-16 is the southern monumental platform in the dyad that closes off the east side of the site core plaza delimited by some of the largest buildings at La Sierra, Strs, 1A-12/17. Structure 1A-17 is 6m to the north and connected to Str. 1A-16 by what seemed initially to be a low stone-faced construction. Structure 1A-14 is 8m to the southwest while the most impressive of the edifices in this group, Str. 1A-13, is ca. 35m to the west across the plaza from Str. 1A-16. Excavations in Str. 1A-16 were limited to a 1x26m trench (Subop. 37C; 26m² uncovered) that cut across the building's approximate center running east-west. The poor state of architectural preservation did not offer sufficient hope of identifying construction units in other portions of the building to warrant searching for these elements and, thus, defining the edifice's basal dimensions and form. Digging pursued in Subop. 37C under the direction of S. Yates reached maximum depths of 1.36m and 2.92m below modern ground surface outside and within architecture, respectively. One clear and a second possible construction phase were recognized in the course of this work.

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	F.1	LCLI, II?
2	Str. 1A-16-1st	U.1-15	-	F.2	LCLII
3	Str. 1A-16-1st (?)	U.14, 16-18	-	-	LCLII/III, III?
4	-	-	S.1	F.3	-

Time Span 1

During this interval at least 0.15m of S.1, a brown, moderately hard-compacted, moderately fine-textured soil, was laid down (the base of this level was not revealed). Set within this soil off Str. 1A-16's west side is a 0.06m thick deposit of burned earth (F.1) that extends 0.63m east-west and pinches out 0.26m west of, and 0.11m below, U.1. The 0.11m separating F.1 from U.1 is filled in by S.1. It appears that what would become the site of Str.1A-16-1st was a locus of sporadic occupation involving at least one interval of intense burning.

Time Span 2

Structure 1A-16-1st was variably well-preserved; constructions on its eastern flank were still clear when excavated while on the west all but the basal facing had largely fallen into ruin. This distinction is most likely due to the covering of the building's eastern side by a deep layer of fill (U.17) during TS.3 while the west seems to have remained exposed to the elements.

Structure 1A-16 is mounted on the east by four fairly steep and high stone-faced risers (U.6, 7, 8, and 10) fashioned primarily of river cobbles set in clear horizontal courses and packed round with chinking stones. The basal riser, U.6, ascends 0.7m above a white plaster floor (U.5) that extends at least 3.6m to the east (its eastern limit was not encountered). Unit 5, like its counterparts U.1 and 16 off the east and north sides of Str. 1A-17, consists of stones set in a white powdery matrix. In general, though U.5 looks like plaster, it is a poorly sorted and weakly consolidated version of that material.

The basal eastern riser, U.6, is 0.58m wide, surfaced with stone, and ends in the 0.48m ascent of U.7. The latter is the facing for the next ascending terrace, a construction that is 2.53m wide and surfaced with a mix of stones and earth. The rocks are densely concentrated in the eastern-most 1.66m of the terrace, their numbers decreasing markedly to the west. Unit 8 rises 0.81m above the U.7 terrace and gives way to a 1.87m-wide surface composed of a mix of earth and stones. Unit 9, a level of schist slabs, marks the west end of the terrace and fronts the next ascending riser (U.10) by 0.23m. Unit 10, in turn, is preserved to 0.44m high though it may have originally stood 0.89m tall to bring it level with the reconstructed earthen summit floor. Unlike its lower analogues, U.10 was made using a combination of cobbles and schist slabs.

Str. 1A-16-1st's western side is faced with four stone-faced ascents (U.1-4) that are fashioned using a combination of unworked cobbles and masonry blocks. There are traces of white plaster on the faces of these risers, implying that the entire west face may have originally been covered with this material. The basal terrace (U.1) is preserved to 0.52m tall though it probably rose to a height of 0.72m to bring it level with the base of the next ascending terrace (U.2). Unlike its eastern counterpart, U.1 apparently rose above an earthen floor. Unit 1's tread is 0.94m wide, surfaced with earth, and ends in the 0.66m-high ascent of U.2. The latter, like all subsequent constructions on the west flank, is in a poor state of preservation. It fronts an earth-and-stone floored terrace that extends back east for 1m where it intersects U.4. The latter is an estimated 0.78m high by 1.4m wide, U.4's earth-and-stone surfaced tread leading to U.3. Unit 3 rises 0.42m and provides direct access to the earthen-floored summit.

No clear evidence of superstructure construction was revealed in Subop. 37C. A level of burnt earth (F.2) caps the Str. 1A-16-1st summit, beginning 0.81m east of U.3's west face and continuing for minimally 2.52m to the east where it enters an unexcavated portion of the summit. It is unclear whether F.2 results from an episode of purposeful burning (either to prepare the floor for use or terminate this version of the platform) or an unfortunate accident near the end of Str. 1A-16-1st's use-life.

The fill exposed in a deep probe into Str. 1A-16-1st's approximate center revealed a series of earthen layers almost completely devoid of stones. The lowest of these entities (U.11) is a brown, fine-textured soil with numerous carbon flecks and a few artifacts and small fragments of *Pachychilus* sp. shells. Unit 11 is 1.46m thick at its deepest exposed point, though its base was not revealed in our excavations. This fill unit slopes up markedly from east-to-west, rising 0.67m over the 1.6m it was exposed. Unit 12, a 0.18-0.22m-thick, gray-brown silt with pockets of medium-gray sand and some artifacts, caps U.11 and follows the same upward

east-to-west slope of the lower entity. Unit 13 overlies U.12 by 0.26-0.8m and consists of a gray-brown, fine-grained soil with numerous small white inclusions and many artifacts. Unlike its antecedents, U.13's upper surface is fairly level, suggesting that it was introduced to create a flat summit surface. An estimated 0.15m of U.14, a yellow-tan silt with occasional small (>1cm in diameter) gravel inclusions, was probably added at this time over U.13. As with its predecessors, U.14 also contains artifacts, though in smaller amounts and densities than those noted in U.13. Embedded in the western exposed segment of U.14 is a 0.07m-thick (maximally) lens of fine-textured gray ash (U.15). Unit 15 extends for 0.51m east-west and rests directly atop U.13. Overall, it appears that Str. 1A-16-1st's fill consists of re-deposited occupation debris that probably derived from several different locales. At least some of this material, especially U.13, may have been the recycled remains of a midden.

By the end of TS.2, Str. 1A-16-1st was a stone-faced, earth-filled platform mounted by four stone-faced risers on the east and west. The building stood 2.65m and 2.9m high on the west and east, respectively, measured 16.75m east-west, and was aligned roughly 350 degrees. The earthen-floored summit encompassed 7.84m east-west and did not support any recorded superstructure architecture. A 2.52m-long (east-west) segment of this surface was burnt, possibly hinting that at least some of the activities performed here involved intensive and/or repetitive heating of an extensive portion of the summit.

Time Span 3

During this span the west side of the building does not seem to have been appreciably altered. The eastern flank, above U.7, however, was covered by as much as 0.87m of a fill composed of a moderately dense concentration of rocks, mostly cobbles, set in a brown earth matrix (U.17). There is no sign of what, if any construction, might have been built over this fill. It is possible that U.17 was introduced primarily to seal Str. 1A-16-1st's upper eastern terraces and not to replace them with similar constructions.

The summit was buried beneath an additional 0.45-0.58m of U.14 (see TS.2). Encapsulated within U.14 is a 0.48m-thick lens of fine-textured, brown soil with a few small (>1cm in diameter) gravel inclusions (U.16). Unit 16 emerges from the excavation baulk supporting U.18 (see below) and runs for 0.68m to the east where it pinches out. Unit 16 rests on U.15 (see TS.2) and is covered by U.14. Unit 14, in turn, was blanketed by 0.07-0.12m of U.17; the portion of this fill unit covering the summit has relatively few included rocks. The only summit construction datable to this span is U.18, a 0.15m-high by 0.32m-wide cobble wall that runs at an angle of 345 degrees across the approximate center of the building. Unit 18 may have divided the final version of Str. 1A-16-1st's summit into eastern and western earthen-floored enclosures covering 3.9m and 3.52m east-west, respectively. No formal floors or stone foundations delimiting the other sides of the putative rooms were encountered. There was no noticeable effort made to raise U.3 and 10, the walls that defined Str. 1A-16-1st's west and east summit margins during TS.2 to enclose the newly added U.14 and U.17 summit fill. This seeming indifference to the retention of summit fill tentatively suggests that the final capping of the building was meant to terminate its use and not to serve as the basis for a new round of formal construction. If so, then U.18 may well be a very late addition raised by those using a platform that had been abandoned before their arrival.

At the conclusion of TS.3, Str. 1A-16-1st may no longer have been in use. It stood 3.32m to 3.23m high, retained its basal measurements and orientation from TS.2, and still

supported an earthen-floored summit. The fill burying that summit and the upper eastern terraces might have been introduced in preparation for the initiation of renovations that were never completed. Alternatively, capping portions of Str. 1A-16-1st may have marked an event that terminated the platform's use. At some point later in TS.3 a low wall was erected at an angle of 345 degrees atop the now-abandoned platform. This construction bisected the summit and may be part of a late squatter settlement on the once-proud edifice.

Time Span 4

Following abandonment, Str. 1A-16-1st was blanketed by continued deposition of S.1. Embedded within this soil are stones fallen from final-phase construction (F.3). Feature 3 is densest on the west flank where it seems to contain many of the remnants of the western terraces. In fact, above the western basal facing (U.1), the remaining three facings are very fragmentary, as though portions of them had been removed in antiquity. Rocks dislodged from late-phase architecture were found in fairly high densities for 2.24m west and 2.62m east of Str. 1A-16-1st's basal risers (U.1 and 6, respectively).

Excavation of the Construction Linking Strs. 1A-16 and 1A-17

Two mutually aligned trenches (Subop. 37B and D) running east-west and separated by a baulk measuring 3.56m were dug across the approximate center of the low construction that seemingly linked Strs. 1A-16 and 17. The eastern of these excavations, Subop. 37D, measured 1x10.82m while its western counterpart, Subop. 37B, encompassed 1x9.42m. Together with an expansion of Subop. 37B, the two trenches cleared ca. 23m² of prehistoric deposits. Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 1.29m and 1.96m below modern ground surface beyond and within construction, respectively. One construction phase and a complex sequence of deposits were identified during the course of this investigation directed by S. Yates.

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	-	-	S.4	-	LCLII?
2	Str.1A-16/17-Sub1	U.3	S.3, 5	F.2-8	LCLII
3	Str. 1A-16/17-Sub2	U.1, 2, 4	-	F.2	LCLII/III
4	-	-	-	F.2	LCLIII/II
5	-	-	S.1, 2	F.1	-

Time Span 1

A coarse-textured, variably hard-compacted, orange-brown sand (S.4) was laid down at this time. Stratum 4 was exposed to thicknesses of 0.25-0.54m (its base was not revealed in our excavations) and rises 0.75m over 14.36m east-to-west before leveling off for 2.6m. From that

point westward S.4 descends 0.31m over the remaining exposed 6.8m uncovered in this direction. It appears, therefore, that Str. 1A-16/17 was raised atop a low natural rise. Recovery of artifacts from S.4 points to a nearby human occupation at this time.

Time Span 2

This interval began with the natural deposition of a fine-textured, hard-compacted, yellow-tan soil (S.3) that includes many small rocks (generally 0.1m across their largest dimension) and a few artifacts. Stratum 3 was recorded only in Subop. 37D where it overlay S.4 by 0.36-0.47m. Stratum 5, a moderately coarse-textured, soft-compacted, orange-brown soil, is S. 3's analogue in Subop. 37B. This 0.04-0.2m thick layer blankets S.4, emerging from beneath U.2 (see below) and extending 1.2m east to where it ends abruptly. Stratum 5 was seemingly truncated, possibly as part of the activities that led to the deposition of F.2 (see below).

Interspersed within and on top of S.3 are variably large lenses of fine-textured, loosely compacted, gray ash containing numerous artifacts, especially sherds (F.4-8). Though these five deposits are physically distinct from each other, their contents and matrices are indistinguishable. Feature 5, exposed on the far eastern edge of Subop. 37D, is as much as 0.45m thick and both underlays and blankets S.3 in this area, resting directly atop S.4. Stratum 3 is not continuous east-west over its eastern-most exposed 1.48m, there being a 0.17m break in its distribution. This gap is filled with F.5. Feature 7, revealed in a deep probe 3.36m west of F.5's western-most exposure, projects 0.15m up from its interface with S.4 and then slopes up 0.36m over 2.5m east-to-west. Feature 7 is 0.04-0.19m (minimally) thick and, like F.5, is embedded within S.3. Feature 6 begins 0.16m west of F.7 and continues for 1.5m in that direction into the western limits of Subop. 37D. This lens reaches a maximum revealed thickness of 0.26m, though its base was not encountered. Feature 8 is an oval-shaped deposit of ash and artifacts that extends 0.34m down from the base of F.7, intruding 0.21m into S.4.

Feature 4 is a series of three adjacent ash-and-artifact lenses that cap S.3 in the area between U.1 and the west wall of Subop. 37D. The eastern-most member of the triad extends 1.78m west from the baulk supporting U.1 and is as much as 0.12m thick. Fourteen centimeters intervenes between this lens and its western neighbor. The latter segment is 0.72m long east-west and reaches a maximum thickness of 0.08. A scant 0.02m intervenes between this and the western-most lens in F.4. The latter continues for 2.72m westward and for an unknown distance beyond our excavation limits. This portion of the feature becomes increasingly thicker as it heads west, eventually reaching a maximum thickness of 0.24m where it departs the excavations.

Feature 3 is a possible construction recorded at the eastern margin of Subop. 37D. This entity consists of a large, unmodified cobble that rises 0.22m above a 0.04m-thick white plaster floor (U.3). Unit 3 rests on S.3 and was traced for 1m west of F.3 where it pinched out. There is some indication that U.3 may pick up again 0.62m east of its intersection with F.3's west face. As was the case with the other plaster floors identified in the excavations of Strs. 1A-16 and 1A-17, U.3 contains small individual rocks set in a white lime matrix and does not appear to be particularly well consolidated. A faced block sits atop, and 0.34m east of, the F.3 cobble's west face (all included in F.3). Altogether, F.3 stands 0.39m above U.3. Feature 5 buries the lower 0.22m of F.3 and all of U.3. Not enough of F.3 was uncovered to be certain of its architectural significance. It may be the remnants of steps leading up to a low, surface-invisible construction to the east (Str. 1A-16/17-Sub1) but this hypothesis was not evaluated.

The stratigraphic situation on the west is less complex. Here, the lower 0.1-0.22m of F.2, a fine-textured, loosely compacted, artifact-rich, gray ash, blankets S.4 and 5 and underlies U.2. This trash deposit covers an observed 7.95m east-to-west. Its eastern edge was not uncovered but it may be that F.2 is the western continuation of F.4. The latter has the same content and composition as F.2 and occupies a comparable depth. Whether this was the case or not, the similarities between F.2 and 4 point to an episode of extensive trash disposal in the area near the end of TS.2. Furthermore, the stratigraphic relations of lower F.2 imply that it was deposited prior to the construction (U.1 and 2) that defined TS.3.

Excavations in Subop. 37D revealed a complex set of activities attributable to TS.2. Interspersed with the accumulation of S.3 were intervals of trash deposition creating discontinuous lenses of artifact-rich ash deposits at varying depths. Midden creation, in fact, may have begun soon after S.4 and 5 were laid down (F.5 and 2 directly overlie these soil layers). The intrusion of S.3 may then represent episodes when earlier trash was sealed by purposefully introduced soil or when this earth was allowed to accumulate by natural means. Sometime towards the middle of this span a plaster floor was laid down, possibly in association with a 0.39m-high stone-faced platform which extended at least 0.73m to the east, continuing beyond our excavation limits (Str. 1A-16/17-Sub1). Much of this construction, however, was subsequently submerged beneath further midden deposits, TS.2 ending with final additions to F.5 and the deposition of F.4 and the lower 0.1-0.22m of F.2. This created a series of closely spaced and variably thick ash-and-artifact lenses that extended for 22.38m east-west (assuming that evidence for this material continues within the unexcavated area separating Subop. 37B and D).

Time Span 3

This interval witnessed the construction of two walls (U.1 and 2) that define the east and west sides of the construction seemingly linking Strs. 1A-16 and 1A-17 (Str. 1A-16/17-Sub2). Both entities, casually made using a mix of cut blocks and unworked cobbles, give the impression of having been introduced to define the east and west limits of an artifact-rich deposit rather than as retaining walls for a substantial construction. Unit 1, the eastern basal facing, is 0.9m wide east-west and at least 0.45m high (its base was not uncovered). This wall seems to rest on F.5. Its western counterpart, U.2, encompasses at least 1.13m east-west and rises ca. 0.6m. It may be that U.2 originally spanned 2.25m, though it is unclear whether the eastern 1.12m of the wall was an integral part of it or a rock cap laid atop F.2. Unit 2 seems to have been built in four sections each with a different orientation (333, 351, 300, and 335 degrees, proceeding from south to north). Unit 1 has only one exposed segment which is aligned 317 degrees. Such variety in orientations contributes to the impression that U.1 and 2 were not part of a symmetrical, substantial construction. The total width of Str. 1A-16/17-Sub2 is 16.2m east-west.

The fill backing U.1 and 2 differs considerably from east to west. On the east, U.4, a fine-textured, hard-compacted, yellow-tan soil with numerous small rocks, extends 5.56m west from U.1. Unit 4 is 0.26-0.38m thick and is distinguished from S.3 by the very large quantity of artifacts, especially sherds, that U.4 contains. Unit 4 overlies F.4 and S.3 in this area. Backing U.2 to the east is an upward continuation of F.2, a fine-textured, soft-compacted, gray ash with numerous included artifacts, especially sherds. Between 0.48-0.92m of F.2 was deposited now behind (east of) U.2. Feature 2 projects roughly 0.49m above the preserved top of U.2; either the wall once stood taller (a proposition not supported by the relative paucity of tumbled stone

found west of the construction [F.1]) or the ash was mounded up and above U.2 originally. How U.4 and F.2 relate is unknown as the area of their interface lies within the unexcavated block separating Subop. 37B and D.

Structure 1A-16/17-Sub2 is a 0.45-0.58m-high construction faced by casually fashioned but broad (0.9m and 1.56m wide) stone walls on the east and west. Measuring 16.2m across east-west, Str. 1A-16/17-Sub2 was generally, though not uniformly, oriented northwest-southeast (segments of its preserved facings ranging from 300-351 degrees). The fill contained by these basal walls is unified by the richness of its artifact content. Otherwise, the eastern and western fill units are markedly distinct; the eastern element has numerous sherds set in a yellow-tan, rocky soil while in its western counterpart the artifacts are suspended in a gray ash. The summit of Str/ 1A-16/17-Sub2 would have been earth but may well not have been flat, rising up 0.49m above the basal wall on the west; there is no evidence of such an ascent on the east.

Time Span 4

During this interval U.2, Str. 1A-16/17-Sub-2's western basal wall, was buried by a 0.3m thick deposit of F.2. The behavioral significance of this entity is unclear. The western extension of F.2 extends 1.5m west of U.2 where it pinches out between S.2 and 4. Recovery of a cache composed of six unbroken small ceramic cups 0.1m west of U.2 and embedded within the ash that buries the wall tentatively supports the notion that F.2-west was purposefully introduced to terminate the use of U.2.

Time Span 5

Following abandonment of Str. 1A-16/17-Sub2, Stratum 2, a moderately fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, brown soil, was laid down. Stratum 2 contains a dense concentration of small rocks (usually 0.15m or less along their longest dimension) and artifacts, particularly sherds. It covers U.1 on the east by 0.24m and accumulated up to 0.47m against the west face of F.2 on the west. Covering all construction and earlier soil levels is S.1, a moderately fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, root-rich, dark brown soil that is 0.16-0.22m thick. Stratum 1 grades to a dark gray ash where it overlies F.2 on the west. Embedded in S.1 are a few, widely dispersed rocks (F.1) that may have fallen from final-phase architecture, most likely that associated with the bordering Strs. 1A-16 and 1A-17.

Chronological Summary

The earliest evidence of occupation in the vicinity of Strs.1A-16 and 1A-17 dates to the Late Classic I (LCL I). Ceramics diagnostic of this span were found mixed with later material in deposits associated with the two excavated buildings. Occupation intensifies in the area during the Late Classic II when Strs. 1A-16-1st, 1A-17-2nd, and 1A-16/17-Sub1 were erected. The complex sequence of trash deposits assigned to TS.2 in the Str. 1A-16/17 excavations also seem to have accumulated during this span. Apparently, the space intervening between Strs. 1A-16 and 1A-17 was a favored location for depositing significant quantities of debris, including the results of burning (ash), during Late Classic II. The presence of numerous, seemingly distinct lenses of this material points to multiple episodes of trash disposal now. Structures 1A-16-1st may have continued in use into the early part of Late

Classic III while its northern neighbor, Str. 1A-17-1st was possibly raised near the end of Late Classic II or early in Late Classic III. It is difficult in both cases to distinguish materials associated with the construction and use of these platforms from those that accumulated on and around them after their abandonment. The sizable midden that had been accumulating between Strs. 1A-16-1st and 1A-17-1st continued to grow now and was sealed on the east and west by the erection of stone walls. More trash may have been added to the deposit after the walls were raised, as suggested by the way in which the ash-and-artifact deposit rises above Str. 1A-16/17-Sub2's western facing (U.2). Probably soon after the stone walls were in place an ash layer containing a cache of diminutive ceramic cups was laid in against that western facing. This likely took place near the Late Classic II/III transition. It was probably at about this time that much of Str. 1A-16-1st's east side and summit was covered with earth-and-stone fill. The removal of some of the stones that once graced that platform's western flank may have occurred now as well. The low cobble wall raised atop Str. 1A-16-1st (U.18) pertains to very late but use of this construction, perhaps dating to Late Classic III. Besides this possibility, however, there are no clear signs of construction or significant occupation dating to the full Late Classic III on or around Strs. 1A-16 and 1A-17. Signs of Postclassic occupation here are completely lacking.