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## PVN OP 106 Excavation Report

Edward M. Schortman  
*Kenyon College*

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## Site 106

Site 106 is ca. 2.3km southwest of Site 104 and 1.9km north of La Sierra. The site's 41 structures, 0.1-3.5m high, are arranged around eight plazas and cover approximately 19,500m<sup>2</sup>. The buildings rest atop a low rise above the surrounding river terrace, the land here ascending gradually from northwest to southeast. Though well-preserved when first recorded in 1975, Site 106 was severely damaged by bulldozing and plowing in late 1987. Most of the site's structures were either leveled or heavily damaged as a result of these depredations, leaving only two edifices, Str. 106-15 and 106-16, reasonably intact. Investigations conducted from May 23-June 2, 1988 under the direction of David Schafer, assisted by Lavinia True, concentrated on these surviving edifices. Fully 34.7m<sup>2</sup> were excavated in the process of this digging.

### Structure 106-15

Structure 106-15 is located immediately east of Str. 106-16. Digging here within Subop. 106B, D, and G uncovered 18.5m<sup>2</sup> within two mutually aligned but discontinuous trenches dug from the north (Subop. 106B) and south sides (Subop. 106D, G) sides of the platform to its summit. A distance of 3.8m separates these excavations. Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 1.08m and 0.81m below modern ground surface outside and within construction, respectively. Two major construction phases were identified in the course of this work supervised by D. Schafer and L. True.

### Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	-	-	S.5	-	LCLII?
2	Str. 106-15-Sub1	U.2, 9, 13-15, 18, 19, 21, 22	-	-	LCLII
3	Str. 106-15-1st	U.1, 3-8, 10-12, 16, 17, 20	-	-	LCLII/III, III
4	-	-	S.1-5	F.1	

### Time Span 1

The earliest activity identified in the environs of Str. 106-15 is the deposition of a fine-textured, hard-compacted, tan soil with many small rock inclusions (S.5). Stratum 5 was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.48m (its base was not found) and runs under TS.2 architecture. The few artifacts recovered from S.5 below TS.2 and 3 architecture point to at least a slight human presence in the area prior to the erection of Strs. 106-15-Sub1 and 106-15-

1st.

### Time Span 2

Structure 106-15-Sub1 is a stone-faced platform that was covered over its northern ca. 16% by Str. 106-15-1st's southern basal facing. The earlier structure's south face is ascended by four low risers progressing to the summit (U.2, 9, 21, and 19). Unit 2 is 0.17m high, its earthen tread extending 0.81m back to the north. Unit 9 rises 0.17m above this terrace, its stone surface extending ca. 0.25m to the north where it is succeeded by U.21. The latter is 0.11m tall, 0.35m wide, its tread surfaced with earth and stone. Unit 19 ascends 0.26m above U.21's tread and gives way to the summit. Structure 106-15-Sub1's east and north faces were not exposed to a sufficient extent to determine the building's full dimensions. On both sides there are at least two stone-faced risers ascending to the summit, U.13 and 14 on the east and U.22 and 18 on the north. Units 13, 21, and 22 are parts of the same continuous construction whereas U.14, 18, and 19 together delimit the east, north, and south sides of the summit. The fill contained by these stone facings consists of a fine-textured, hard-compacted, light brown-to-tan soil that contains at least a few medium-size stones (U.15).

All-in-all, Str. 106-15-Sub1 is a stone-faced, earth-and-stone-filled platform that stands 0.71m high (on the south), measures 5.8m north-south, and is aligned roughly 350 degrees (only 1m of the building's east-west dimension was uncovered). The summit covers 3.8m north-south and is fronted by four low risers on the south. At least two risers graced the building's east and north flanks though the former presence of additional ascents on these sides cannot be ruled out. All facings were fashioned of unmodified river cobbles set in a mud mortar.

### Time Span 3

During this interval Str. 106-15-1st was built, encroaching onto Str. 106-15-Sub1's north side. It is unclear whether the 4.6m of the earlier construction that protruded south of the northern platform was incorporated into Str. 106-15-1st. The lack of clear fill overlying Str. 106-15-Sub1 implies that its exposed southern portion continued in use during TS.3, possibly serving as a low frontal terrace projecting 4.6m south of Str. 106-15-1st's basal facing (U.10). The latter was poorly preserved but is estimated to have stood 0.62m above Str. 106-15-Sub1's summit and to have run back 1.01m to U.11, the next riser ascending towards the summit. Unit 11 is 0.42m high by 1.91m wide and ends at U.12. Unit 12 ascends 0.71m above U.11 and may have bounded the summit's south side; excavations were not pursued far enough northward to determine if this was the case. The fill retained by U.10 and 11 consists of small to large cobbles set in a moderately fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, light brown-to-dark brown soil (U.20).

On the north, seven stone-faced ascents lead from ancient ground surface to the summit (U.1, 3-8). Unit 1, the basal northern riser, stands 0.15m high and extends 0.42m back to the south where it is succeeded by U.3. The latter is an estimated 0.31m high by 1.57m wide, its tread surfaced with earth. Unit 4 stands 0.58m above U.3 and is succeeded, 0.37m to the south, by U.5. Like U.3, all of the succeeding risers (U.5-8) are poorly preserved. They ascend, from north-to-south, in increments of 0.4m, 0.58m, 0.32m, and 0.35m to the summit, their treads measuring 1.46m, 1.46m, and 1.41m (U.5, 6, and 7, respectively). Unit 8, which provides the final step-up to the summit on the north, is 0.89m wide and retains a fill composed of small to

large cobbles set in a fine-textured, hard-compacted, light brown-to-tan soil (U.17). The considerable girth of U.8 may imply that it was the northern wall of the platform's core against which the U.1, 3-7 terraces were appended. Digging was not carried deep enough against this construction unit to determine if this was the case. The fill (U.16) retained by the northern risers is a moderately fine-textured, hard-compacted, light brown soil containing small to medium-size cobbles; it is essentially identical to U.17.

By the conclusion of TS. 3, Str. 106-15-1st was a stone-faced, earth-and-stone-filled platform that measured 20m across north-south (from U.1-U.2), stood an estimated 2.69m high on the north and 2.46m tall on the south, and was aligned roughly 87 degrees. The platform's summit encompassed approximately 4.65m across north-south. An earlier construction, Str. 106-15-Sub 1, was incorporated into Str. 106-15-1st, serving as a 0.71m-high projection extending 4.6m south of the platform's basal facing (U.10). Seven risers ascend to the summit on the north and south, including the extant portions of Str. 106-15-1st. All walls were fashioned of unmodified river cobbles set in a mud mortar. Terrace treads were generally surfaced with a mixture of earth and stones.

#### Time Span 4

After Str. 106-15-1st was abandoned deposition of S.5 on the building's north side resumed. Approximately 0.16m of this soil (described under TS.1) was laid down now covering U.1 and 3. No comparable resumption of S.5's deposition was noted off Str. 106-15-1st's south flank. Covering S.5 by 0.06-0.34m is a moderately fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, tan soil (S.4). Stratum 4 is finer textured and more tightly compacted on the north side of Str. 106-15-1st than it is on the south. Stratum 3, in turn, blankets S.4 by 0.16-0.32m and consists of a moderately fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, brown soil. Once again, the northern manifestation of this layer is finer textured and harder compacted than its southern analogue. Stratum 2, a moderately hard-compacted, brown sand, was found covering S.3 by 0.12-0.31m only on the south. Stratum 1 caps the soil levels outlined above on both the north and south. This layer is comprised of a moderately fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, root-rich, dark gray-brown soil and is 0.02-0.18m thick. Embedded in S.1-4 is a moderately dense concentration of stones that apparently fell from final-phase architecture (F.1). Most of the F.1 rocks were found lying atop terrace surfaces, a few extending only 0.34m north of the platform's northern basal wall (U.1).

#### Structure 106-16

Structure 106-16 adjoins Str. 106-15 on the west. Digging here within Subop. 106C, E, F, and H uncovered 16.6m<sup>2</sup>, most of the work being concentrated on the north flank where 12.7m<sup>2</sup> were exposed within Subop. 106C, E, F, and H. Excavations were pursued to maximum depths of 1.48m and 0.54m below modern ground surface outside and within architecture, respectively. Though one building phase was identified in the course of this work, our limited investigation of architectural fill leaves open the very real possibility that additional, earlier construction episodes remain to be discovered. D. Schafer and L. True directed these investigations.

#### Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	-	-	S.3-5	-	LCLII?
2	Str. 106-16-1st	U.1-11	-	-	LCLII/III, III
3	-	-	S.1-3	F.1	

### Time Span 1

Off Str. 106-16-1st's north side at least parts of three soil levels were laid down prior to TS.2. The earliest of these layers, S.5, is a fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, light tan clay that was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.28m (its base lies beyond our excavation limits). Stratum 5, in turn, is covered by 0.28m of S.4, a fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, light brown clay with small white inclusions. Both S.4 and 5 run relatively flat over the 1m they were exposed extending north-south immediately north of Str. 106-16-1st's north basal wall (U.1). At least 0.12m of S.3, a fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, brown clay with small white inclusions, covers S.4 and underlies TS. 2 architecture (U.1, once again). On the south, S.3 was the only soil layer identified as having been deposited prior to TS.2. Here S.3 is at least 0.42m thick, its base continuing below excavation limits. The disposition of stones tumbled from final-phase architecture (F.1) and situated within S.3 suggests that a depression, roughly 0.55m deep, fronted Str. 106-16-1st on this flank. The declivity was apparently filled in during TS.1 by continued deposition of S.3 along with rocks derived from TS. 2 construction. The behavioral significance of this depression is unclear.

No artifacts were retrieved from S.5 though S.3 and 4 did yield cultural material. There was likely human settlement in the area while the last two soils were accumulating.

### Time Span 2

Structure 106-16-1st is fronted on the north by an outset composed of cut blocks set largely on end (U.1). Unit 1 stands 0.4m high, runs 1.07m east-west, and projects 0.48m north of the platform's basal facing (U.11). Unit 11 is about the same height as U.1 but the 0.8m of it that was exposed east of the outset is made of unmodified river cobbles. Unit 2, the next ascending riser to the summit, is 0.98m south of U.1 and stands 0.3m above the latter's tread. Bounding U.2 on the east is a construction fashioned of masonry blocks that stands an estimated 0.5m high above U.11 (U.10). Unit 10's full dimensions are not known but it may have functioned as a balustrade delimiting a set of steps (U.2-6) leading up to the summit. The earthen tread of one of these putative steps (U.2) 1.01m wide and is succeeded by a sequence of three closely spaced risers (U.3-5) that are 0.3m, 0.28m, and 0.48m tall by 0.17m and 0.34m wide (U.3 and 4, respectively). Whereas U. 3 and 5 are fashioned using unmodified cobbles the intervening riser, U.4, incorporates some cut blocks. The U.3 and 4 treads are made of stone while the 1.24m-wide surface backing U.5 seemingly consisted of a mix of earth and stone. Unit 6 rises 0.4m above the U.5 tread; it is unclear how many additional terraces led to the summit.

Only the two lowest terraces on Str. 106-16-1st's south side were exposed (U.7 and 8). The basal riser (U.7) is 0.52m high by 1.7m wide whereas the poorly preserved next ascent, U.8, is an estimated 0.28m tall. The exposed fill backing these terrace facings consists of a fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, brown clay in which a few medium to small cobbles are included (U.9).

Overall, Str. 106-16-1st is a stone-faced, earth-and-stone-filled platform that measures 15.1m north-south, rose at least 2.16m high on the north, and is aligned roughly 78 degrees. The north flank was apparently graced with an outset staircase that ascended *via* at least six risers towards the summit. The basal and fourth risers (U.1 and 4) were faced with cut blocks while a masonry balustrade may well have bounded the staircase on the east; we did not ascertain whether a comparable unit lies to the west. Two of an unknown number of terraces were uncovered on Str. 106-16-1st's south side. Most of the platform's exposed facings and treads were made of unmodified cobbles set in a mud mortar. As noted above, the first and fourth ascending risers on the north were made of cut blocks as was the putative eastern balustrade.

### Time Span 3

Following Str. 106-16-1st's abandonment, deposition of S.3 recommenced. As pointed out earlier, S.3 now apparently filled a depression estimated to have been 0.55m deep off the building's south side whereas on the north about 0.43m of this soil collected. Stratum 2, a moderately coarse-textured, moderately hard-compacted, brown, sandy soil, blanketed S.3 by 0.12-0.3m. A moderately fine-textured, moderately soft-compacted, root-rich, dark gray-brown soil (S.1), in turn, covers S.2 by 0.05-0.38m. Embedded within S.1, 2, and upper S.3 is a light to fairly dense concentration of stones fallen from final-phase architecture (F.1). Feature 1's rocks are particularly common on the south where they extend at least 2.1m away from U.7, continuing beyond our excavations to the south. As noted in the discussion of TS.1, the northernmost of these stones were found sloping down and away from U.7 to the south, as though they were lying on the north edge of an ill-defined pit set against the platform's south basal wall. The F.1 rocks further to the south also betray this north-to-south downward tilt. Feature 1 is far less in evidence on the north where very few stones dislodged from TS.2 architecture were noted beyond (north of) U.1. A moderately light concentration of F.1 stones overlies the exposed terraces.

### Chronological Summary

The earliest evidence of human occupation at Site 106 dates to Late Classic II. This may have been the period when the center was first occupied, though earlier settlement cannot be precluded based on our limited excavation sample. At least one building, Str. 106-15-Sub1, was raised during Late Classic II. Both Str. 106-15-1st and 106-16-1st reached their final forms during the Late Classic II/III transition and continued to be occupied into Late Classic III. There is no evidence of a human presence here in the Postclassic.