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PVN OP 144 Excavation Report

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Site 144

Site 144 consists of 19 structures all of which are 2.5m or less in height. Ten of the buildings (Strs. 144-1/3, 5, and 8/12) are organized in a roughly circular arrangement around a central patio (that central space covering 57x71m) while three more (Strs. 13-15) occupy the summit of a ca. 0.7m-high platform (Str. 144-16) 95m northeast of the patio. Structure 144-17 is roughly 50m south of the patio while Strs. 144-4, 6, and 7 are 8-14m west of Strs. 144-8 and 18 on the patio's western flank. In addition to these physically salient remains, artifact scatters that appear to be the remains of middens associated with ephemeral surface-level buildings were recorded for about 80m west, 300m east, 50m north, and 60m south of the patio. At least 12 distinct concentrations of cultural and, occasionally, organic material (especially *Pachyichilus* sp. shells), 3-6m in diameter, were recorded in this area. The high, dense ground cover that blanketed much of the terrain when Site 144 was intensely investigated in 1996, however, undoubtedly hid many other similar concentrations from view. It appears that Site 144's surface-visible architecture is the core of an extensive settlement most of which was composed of surface-level buildings fashioned from perishable materials.

The terrain over which Site 144 extends is relatively level. Site 128 lies ca. 0.25km to the northeast of Site 144 while the late prehistoric center of Naco is about 2.75km to the southwest. The closest water source is the perennial Rio San Bartolo, lying approximately 400m northeast of Site 144. When originally mapped in 1978, Site 144 was in low grass and had suffered no apparent disruption. By the time excavations were initiated here in 1996, however, much of the settlement's architecture had been either severely damaged or completely obliterated by modern construction. Our investigations, conducted from January 17-February 29, therefore, concentrated on those edifices and their environs which appeared to be the best preserved. It was hoped that by concentrating on Site 144's architectural survivors we could maximize information on building form and function prior to the settlement's eventual burial beneath an encroaching modern community. Seven edifices (Strs. 1, 2, 5, 8, 11, 18, and 19) were excavated under the direction of M. Knepler, J. Mooney, M. Morrison, S. Moorehead, and M. Turek, J. Douglass providing valuable assistance in recording several buildings. Fully 527m² was cleared within and around the Site 144 patio in the course of this work, 553m² being excavated here and in the test-pitting program conducted in the center's environs.

Structure 144-1

Structure 144-1 is on the patio's northeast corner ca. 11m north of Str. 144-10 and 10.4m southeast of Str. 144-2. Excavations pursued here within Subop. 144D, G, H, I, and S uncovered 71m² in the course of revealing the edifice's western half. Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 0.52m and 0.3m below modern ground surface outside and within architecture, respectively. A single building phase was revealed in the course of these investigations. M. Morrison directed all excavations on and around Str. 144-1.

Time Spans

<u>Time</u> <u>Span</u>	<u>Construction</u> <u>Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
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1	-	-	S.1	-	LCLIII/EPC
2	Str. 144-1-1st	U.1-5	-	F.1	LPC
3	-	-	S.1, 2	F.2	-

Time Span 1

This interval is marked by the deposition of S.1, a brown loam (10YR 5/3). At least 0.2m of S.1 was laid down prior to Str. 144-1-1st's construction; the layer's base was not encountered during our excavations.

Time Span 2

Structure 144-1-1st is a surface-level edifice defined on the north, west, and south by 0.1m-high by 0.18-0.21m-wide stone foundations (U.3, 2, and 1, respectively). These constructions are so low and narrow that they were probably footings for relatively ephemeral upper walls. A 2.2m-wide gap in the northern footing, U.3, is located 5.6m east of the building's northwest corner. The floor of this possible doorway is burned orange-red (F.1), suggesting that the area was subject to intense heat at some point during TS.2. Feature 1 is roughly circular, measuring 2.2m in diameter; the fire-altered earth extends 1.3m outside Str. 144-1-1st north of U.3 and 0.9m within the edifice.

Structure 144-1-1st's earthen-floored interior is dominated by a 0.43m-high, irregularly shaped stone construction that essentially runs east-west (U.4). Unit 4 is 6.8m long by 1.45m (over the western 2.5m) to 0.85m across (over the remaining section to the east). Two projections emanate from U.4. One extends 0.7m north of the construction's western end (measuring 2.1m east-west). The other is 0.85-1m wide and runs 1.45-2.05m south of U.4's approximate center (this discrepancy in length is due to the southern projection's location at the point where the U.4's two segments of varying width meet). The southern projection narrows by 0.15m from north to south. Unit 4's southwest corner is inset 0.45m from the construction's south face, said inset measuring 0.85m across east-west. As should be clear from the above convoluted description, U.4 is a complex construction. It apparently functioned, in part, as a room-divider; the east-running segment separating Str. 144-1-1st's interior into northern and southern segments. The southern projection would have subdivided the latter compartment while the northern projection delimited the western margin of the northern enclosure. The resulting compartments encompass 2.1x3.6m (the southwest room), 3.1x4m (minimally; the southeast room), and 1.5x7.9m (minimally; the northern room); the eastern limits of the southeast and northern enclosures were not uncovered. Passage among rooms was unimpeded by surviving architecture. The northern room was easily reached through the breach in U.3 while its southern counterparts could be entered by either passing around U.4's western (0.65m wide between U.4 and the western footing, U.2) or eastern sides. Unit 4's substantial size and width, especially over the western segment, suggest that it doubled as a bench.

Structure 144-1-1st, by TS. 2's conclusion, was a surface-level building measuring 5.7m north-south by at least 10.6m east-west, oriented approximately 116 degrees 30 minutes.

Entrance to the interior was achieved by passing through an ample (2.2m wide) door in the northern wall. The three earthen-floored rooms identified within this building's relatively insubstantial walls cover 7.6m², 12.4m²+, and 11.9m²+. The northern enclosure (11.9m²+) was apparently entered first, the southern compartments being reached by traveling east or west around the substantial east-west running medial wall. The western 2.5m of this wall may have doubled as a 1.45m-wide by 0.43m-high stone-faced bench. An area of burned earth with a diameter of 2.2m fills the northern door. The location and restricted nature of this feature suggests that it was purposefully created, possibly serving as a hard-packed threshold that reduced the amount of dust tracked into the building while resisting erosion resulting from frequent foot traffic.

All TS. 2 construction consists of, primarily, river-rounded cobbles set in a mud mortar. Some effort was devoted to orienting the naturally flatter faces of U.4's rocks outward; no comparable care was devoted to the stones used to fashion the foundations, U.1-3.

Time Span 3

This interval marks the abandonment of Str. 144-1-1st. During TS.3, S.1 continued to be deposited, that soil eventually covering all but the tops of the uppermost stones in U.4. Stratum 2, a dark brown (7.5YR) sandy silty clayey loam with some gravel included, was recorded 2.76m north of Str. 144-1-1st. Here, S.2 rises up from the base of excavation, ascending 0.28m over 1.54m into the northern excavation limits. Stratum 1 covers S.2 by 0.1-0.37m. Very few stones fallen from Str. 144-1-1st's architecture (F.2) were recorded during excavation. A moderately light scattering of these rocks was located within the building's perimeter, mostly on the south side where they had apparently tumbled from U.4.

Structure 144-2

Structure 144-2, 10.4m northwest of Str. 144-1 and 4m east of Str. 144-5, closes off the patio's north side. Excavations conducted here within Subops. 144K, M, N, O, and P uncovered 114m² in the process of completely clearing Str. 144-2-1st. Digging was carried down to maximum depths of 0.25m and 0.5m below modern ground surface within and outside architecture, respectively, revealing a single construction phase. All work on Str. 144-2 was directed by M. Kneppler.

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	-	LCLIII/EPC
2	Str. 144-2-1st	U.1-11	-	F.1	LPC
3	-	-	S.1, 2	F.2	-

Time Span 1

Time Span 1 is marked by the deposition of at least 0.3m of S.1, a reddish-brown (7.5YR 5/4) soil that underlies TS.2 architecture. S.1's base lies beyond excavation limits.

Time Span 2

Structure 144-2-1st is a surface-level building delimited on the west, south, and east by 0.3-0.55m-high by 0.3-0.35m-wide foundations (U.2, 1, and 3, respectively). The northern flank is completely open. A 0.46m-high stone block (U.11) projects 0.6m north and into Str.144-2-1st's interior from the center of U.1. Unit 11 measures 0.8m across and is 6.65m from the building's interior southwest and southeast corners.

Structure 144-2-1st's earthen-floored interior is subdivided by a massive east-west-running medial wall (U.4) off of which a small enclosure, bounded by U.5-8, is built on the west. Unit 4 is 6.35m long, measures 0.95-1.25m across (widening from east-to-west), and stands 0.4-0.7m high. Units 5-8 achieve roughly the same height as U.4 and were apparently built along with that unit, the easternmost construction in the set (U.5) interdigitating with U.4. Units 5-8 define an earthen-floored enclosure covering 1.4x1.5m and accessed through a 0.7m-wide door in its northeast corner between U.4 and 8. Another wall (U.9), 1.95m long north-south by 0.65m wide and 0.4m high, lies 1.4m east of U.4 and is not connected to the latter. Unit 9's southern margin lines up with the southern edge of U.4. Structure 144-2-1st, therefore, contained three rooms: a northern enclosure completely open in this direction and measuring 1.3x15.3m; a comparably extensive southern compartment covering 31.4m²; and a small northern-facing cubicle that encompasses 2.1m². Passage between the northern to southern rooms was achieved, on the east, by moving through the 1.4m-wide gap between U.4 and 9 or the 1.65m-wide space separating U.9 from U.3 or, on the west, by traversing the 1.7m-wide space between U.7 and 2.

An irregularly shaped area composed of pieces of burnt earth and white plaster flecks (U.10) runs along, and extends 1.1m east, of U.4's south face. Unit 10 seems to consist of the remnants of a formal floor that widens from 0.4m to 1.8m from west to east over its 6.2m length; U.10 begins on the west 1.5m east of U.4's junction with U.5. Though the plaster remains are fragmentary, it appears that the latter overlies the burnt earth level. Another concentration of burnt earth (F.1) covers 0.9x1.2m in Str. 144-2-1st's northeast corner, up against the west side of U.3's northern terminus. It may be that the entirety of the building's interior was originally burnt to create a hardened earth floor that was formalized over part of its extent with the addition of a thin (no more than 0.02m thick) white plaster.

By TS. 2's conclusion, Str. 144-2-1st was a surface-level edifice measuring 5.6x15.6m and which was aligned ca. 281 degrees. The building's interior was easily accessed from the north, there being no footing to bar entry on this flank. The extensive interior was divided into two long rooms arranged in a north-south line; the northern compartment covering 19.9m² while its southern neighbor measures 31.4m². A small (2.1m²) cubicle bounded by stone foundations and accessed through a 0.7m-wide gap in its northeast corner was built off the west side of the building's main-east-west running medial wall. It is possible that the floors of these rooms were

originally fired to harden their surfaces. At least parts of the southern floor were apparently surfaced with a thin white plaster. The medial wall (U.4) is sufficiently wide and substantial that it could have served as a bench as well as room divider. The northern projection integrated with the southern footing (U.11) in the southern room may have been a stone-faced and -surfaced shelf or room divider.

All architecture dating to TS.2 consists primarily of river-rounded cobbles set in a mud mortar. Some effort was made to orient the naturally flatter aspects of these rocks outward. This is especially the case for U.4-9, the walls that delimit rooms within Str. 144-2-1st. The rocks used to make the footings do not seem to be so carefully positioned.

Time Span 3

Following abandonment, Str. 144-2-1st was buried by the continued deposition of S.1. This layer, in turn, was blanketed by 0.08-0.31m of S.2, a brown (10YR 5/4) soil. A very few rocks fallen from final phase architecture (F.2) were recorded scattered within and beyond Str. 144-2-1st's bounds.

Structure 144-5

Structure 144-5 appeared, on the surface, to be a low platform that occupied the patio's northwest corner. Structure 144-5 is sandwiched between Str. 144-2, 4m to the east, and Str. 144-18, about 18m to the south-southwest. Excavations here, conducted within Subop. 144C and F, were pursued to maximum depths of 0.32m and 0.74m below modern ground surface outside and within construction, respectively, revealing one building phase. Fully 71m² were cleared in this area under the direction of M. Knepler.

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	Str. 144-5-2nd	U.1-2, 6-7	-	F.1, 2	LPC
2	Str. 144-5-1st	U.3-5, 8	-	F.3, 4	LPC
3	-	-	S.1	F.5	-

Time Span 1

Structure 144-5-2nd is unlike anything seen at Site 144 or elsewhere in the Naco valley. In essence, it is a ca. 0.59m-high earthen mound into which two circular basins were built, one each on the building's southeastern and northwestern flanks. The best preserved example is U.1, a circular, flat-bottomed pit set within earth fill (U.6 and 7) and lined with a 0.02m-thick layer of fire-hardened earth (included in U.1). Unit 1 measures 2.4-2.5m across at the top while its base has a diameter of 1.2m; the drop from rim to base is 0.45m. The sides slope down to the base

gradually from all sides, creating a sub-hemispherical profile. The eastern curve is gentler, however, than its western counterpart, creating an asymmetrical profile. Patches of white plaster still adhered to U.1's interior surface when excavated. A niche measuring 0.22m across intersects the approximate center of the basin's northeastern perimeter and extends 0.36m into U.1's interior. This indentation is roughly 0.25m deep, its southwestern terminus sitting ca. 0.2m above, and overlooking, U.1's base. A 0.04m thick layer of yellowish-red fire-altered soil (5YR 4/6) containing some carbon flecks (F.2) parallels, and runs directly beneath, U.1.

Unit 1 was dug into U.6 and 7. The former is a yellowish-brown soil (10YR 5/6) that is minimally 0.32m thick (its base was not clearly identified in our excavations). Unit 6 runs for at least 0.07m under F.2. The light yellowish-brown soil (10YR 6/4) of U.7 caps U.6 by 0.2m and runs to the top of U.1. Units 6 and 7 are earthen fill units that together support U.1.

Unit 2 is poorly preserved but seems to be a formal analogue of U.1. Lying 3.15m northwest of U.1, the curved, burned earth rim of U.2's southeastern perimeter was uncovered. Approximately 1/4 of this rim's circumference was unearthed, the entire construction having a reconstructed diameter of 2m. The base and most of the walls were not preserved except on the south where U.2 is 0.42m deep. Units 1 and 2 are at nearly identical stratigraphic positions, suggesting that they were built at roughly the same time and are supported by the same earthen fill (U.6 and 7).

Beginning 1m northeast of U.2 and resting at a point roughly equivalent to the tops of U.1 and 2 is a layer of fire-altered earth colored deep red (F.1). Time did not permit identification of F.1's limits, though we determined that it was at least 4.7m across northwest-southeast and 9.65m long northeast-southwest.

Overall, Str.144-5-2nd appears to have been a 0.59m-high earthen platform lacking basal retaining walls. Two circular, flat-based, sub-hemispherically shaped basins were intruded into the platform's northwestern and southeastern flanks 3.15m apart. These units were apparently built about the same time and have similar dimension; the southeastern one measuring 2.4-2.5m across and 0.45m deep while its northwestern counterpart has an inferred diameter of 2m and depth of 0.42m. The basins are lined with fire-hardened earth and at least the better-preserved southeastern example was coated with a thin white plaster. The latter also has a 0.22m-wide by ca. 0.25m-deep niche cut 0.36m into its northeast side; the northwestern basin was not sufficiently well preserved to determine if it, too, had a similar indentation. Lying 1m northeast of the two basins is an extensive area (covering at least 43.4m²) of fire-reddened earth located at a point roughly equivalent to the tops of these units. Whatever purposes Str. 144-5-2nd served during TS.1, these activities involved the use of two sizable, well-sealed circular basins and a summit subject to intense burning.

Time Span 2

During this interval U.1, the southeastern basin, was filled with a layer of flat-laid rocks ca. 0.2m thick and overlain by a 0.04-0.1m-thick layer of earth containing large quantities of ceramic fragments (all included in F.3). The filling in of U.2 on the northwest followed a somewhat different sequence. Here a 0.12m-high stone wall (U.3) extends 1.35m southeast from

a point near the center of the basin's reconstructed northwestern margin. Unit 3 is 0.4m across along its north-westernmost 0.55m, narrowing to 0.1m for the remainder of its extent and sits 0.2m above the reconstructed base of U.2. This wall rests on a 0.06m-thick level of fire-altered, charcoal-flecked earth (F.4) similar to F.2 (see TS.1) which, in turn, blankets a 0.14m-thick soil level (all included in F.4). Whatever U.3 was used for, it too was superseded later in TS.2.

Capping U.1-3 is an approximately 0.35m-thick level of the same earth found in F.3, but with far fewer artifacts (U.8). Unit 8 buries U.1 and 2 while raising Str. 144-5-1st's total height to 0.94m. Capping the newly elevated summit are U.4 and 5. These very casually built stone lines rest at a level 0.32-0.36m above the tops of U.1 and 2. Unit 4 is 0.19m tall by 0.3-0.8m across, the construction widening from southwest to northeast across its 1.3m length. Unit 5 is a block of stone standing 0.18m high and covering 0.5m north-south by 0.35m east-west. Approximately 0.1m separates U.4 on the north from U.5 on the south. Both of these constructions are within 0.2m of modern ground surface and appeared to have been significantly disturbed from their original positions.

It is unclear whether F.1, the fire-reddened soil lying east of U.1 and 2, was still exposed during TS.2. Most likely, this surface was buried by U.8 near the interval's conclusion.

Structure 144-5-1st's functions apparently differed from those of its predecessor; the southern basin was filled in while the northern pit seemingly remained in use in a modified form. Both constructions were eventually sealed by soil used to elevate the platform's height resulting in a 0.94m-tall edifice topped by poorly understood summit constructions. The burned earth summit surface east of these constructions may have remained in use during early TS.2 but was probably covered by the aforementioned earth fill near the period's end. No surviving construction dating to TS.2 was sufficiently well-preserved to yield information on the building's orientation.

Time Span 3

Following abandonment, Str. 144-5-1st was blanketed by the deposition of a 0.07-0.31m-thick brown (10YR 5/4) humus layer (S.1). Embedded in S.1 is a very light scatter of stones apparently fallen from Str. 144-5-1st (F.5).

Structure 144-8

Structure 144-8 is the southern member of a pair of buildings that together close off the patio's western flank. Structure 144-18, the northern element in the duo, is 2.9m in that direction while Str. 144-3 lies about 27m to the southeast. Fully 120m² was cleared here within Subop. 144 B, L, R, and T in the course of exposing the entirety of the structure. Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 1.4m and 0.62m below modern ground surface outside and within architecture, respectively. As was the case with its northern neighbor, Str. 144-18, the cutting of a road through this portion of the settlement damaged Str. 144-8, especially on its eastern flank. Unlike its northern counterpart, however, destruction here was limited to shearing away part of the edifice's eastern summit, leaving the bottom-most portion of the basal wall intact. The investigation of Str. 144-8, directed J. Mooney and S. Moorehead, revealed a complex

architectural history for this structure, consisting of at least three building episodes

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	-	LCLIII/EPC?
2	Str. 144-8-3rd	U.1-10	-	-	LPC
3	Str. 144-8-2nd	U.11-21	-	-	LPC
4	Str. 144-8-1st	U.22-23	-	-	LPC
5	-	-	-	F.1	-

Time Span 1

Deposition of a yellowish-brown (10YR 5/6) silty clay (S.1) is the first activity identified in Str. 144-8's environs. Stratum 1 is culturally sterile and was revealed to a maximum thickness of 0.3m before excavation ceased (the base of this earth level was not encountered). This layer runs more-or-less flat, dropping 0.02m over an exposed 3.53m north-to-south. Covering S.1 by 0.04-0.07m is S.2, a yellowish-brown soil which contains some artifacts and was apparently burned to a reddish hue. Further discussion of this flat-lying entity is reserved for TS.2 as the heating may well have been related to the erection of Str. 144-8-3rd.

Time Span 2

Structure 144-8-3rd is a surface-level building delimited by two sets of parallel foundations (U.1-8) that probably defined the interior and exterior faces of the edifice's perimeter walls. On the south and west, the surviving portions of the exterior facing (U.6 and 5, respectively) are sloping zones of white plaster, ca. 0.02m thick. Units 6 and 5 ascend at an angle of ca. 30 degrees and were apparently set directly on the perimeter wall's earthen footing. The exterior facings on the east and north (U.3 and 4, in turn) consist of a thin plaster coating applied over ca. 0.16m-high cobble walls. The interior wall facings (U. 1, 2, 7, 8) are composed of ca. 0.2m-high by 0.06-0.14m-wide walls fashioned of small cobbles (the stones averaging 0.1m on their longest visible dimension). These units are located 0.12-0.25m from their exterior-facing counterparts. Given the observed arrangement, we infer that Str. 144-8-3rd's perimeter walls were made of perishable materials, probably bajareque, set in the gap between interior and exterior facings, and faced with white plaster on at least their exterior bases. A 0.9m-wide break in the edifice's southern exterior footing (U.6) may be a doorway. The dirt comprising this threshold is particularly hard-packed. Said breach is 3.85m east and 2.25m west of Str. 144-8-3rd's southwest and southeast corners, respectively. It is unclear whether there is a comparable gap in U.1, the interior facing of the southern perimeter wall.

Relatively large, flat stones (measuring 0.26x0.44m and 0.2x0.4m) were recorded at Str. 144-8-3rd's southwest and southeast exterior corners (included in U.6). These flat-laid slabs may have been supports for posts that originally held up the building's roof. A third, flat-laid rock (0.28x0.32m) was located in the approximate line of U.5, 2.36m north of the southwest corner. It may be that these post foundations were originally placed at regular intervals along the building's long sides as well as at the corners. Additional examples were not identified during excavation, however.

The extensive interior space bordered by U.1-8 measures 5.88x11.36m and may have been floored with white plaster (U.9). The latter rests on a 0.04-0.07m-thick level of yellowish-brown, fire-reddened soil (S.2). Stratum 2 contains numerous small charcoal flecks, supporting the notion that this layer was burned prior to plastering. The inferred heating may have been intentional, designed to harden the floor. Unfortunately, U.9 and S.2 were encountered in only a few, discontinuous locales, and we cannot say whether the entirety of Str. 144-8-3rd was surfaced in this fashion.

Unit 10, on the west side of Str. 144-8-3rd's room, is a set of two plaster-coated earthen wall stubs that are 0.12m apart and run parallel to each other for their exposed 0.4m east-west. Unit 10's components are 0.1-0.15m high and 1-2mm thick. The significance of this construction is uncertain; it may be the remains, fortuitously preserved beneath architectural fill from TS.3 (U.12), of the north and south sides of a wall that divided Str. 144-8-3rd's interior into southern and northern rooms. These thin columns of white-plastered dirt, therefore, could be all that survives of a perishable wall originally surfaced with earth and coated with a thin plaster.

Structure 144-8-3rd is a surface-level edifice covering 7x12m, oriented ca. 351 degrees, and with perishable perimeter walls that are 0.12-0.25m wide. At least the basal exteriors of these walls were covered with a thin white plaster. A 0.9m-wide doorway provided access to the ample interior from the south. The central room has a fire-hardened earth surface covered with white plaster. Though it is not clear, Str. 144-8-3rd's interior was seemingly divided into at least two rooms, a southern compartment measuring 5.88x5.38 (31.6m²) while its northern counterpart encompasses 5.88x5.86m (34.5m²). Separating these rooms is a perishable wall surfaced with earth that was, in turn, covered with a thin white plaster, at least at its base. No sign of built-in furniture, such as benches, was noted though we were not able to remove most of the later fill to reveal all Str. 144-8-3rd's interior.

The stones used in Str. 144-8-3rd construction are primarily river-rounded cobbles and pebbles held together using a mud mortar. The plaster seems to have been made from limestone.

Time Span 3

During this interval, Str. 144-8 was converted from a surface-level edifice (Str. 144-8-3rd) into a platform (Str. 144-8-2nd). This metamorphosis was accomplished by dismantling the perishable perimeter wall and, most likely using U.1-8 as foundations, raising stone basal facings above them (U.17-20). These basal walls ascend 0.6m, are covered with a thin plaster coating, and are set at an angle of ca. 30 degrees back from vertical. Units 17-20 contain a 0.6m-thick fill composed of cobbles set in an earth matrix (U.12) capped by a plaster floor that may have been

resurfaced at least four times (U.21). Though the precise contours of this formal surface were difficult to infer, scattered remnants suggest that the central 1.4m north-south by 2.45m east-west was painted red while the flanking areas on the north and south were left white. The red-painted segment faces directly over the western steps (U.14), the latter situated on Str. 144-8-2nd's axis. Most of U.14 had been destroyed by recent construction, the only surviving portions being plaster-coated corners of what seem to have been two risers that are ca. 0.4m wide north-south with a tread measuring 0.6m across. Each riser was roughly 0.3m high. A second potential entryway consists of a plaster-coated earthen ramp (U.13) built over the site of Str. 144-8-3rd's southern doorway. Unit 13 is 0.85m wide and projects 0.62m south of the platform's southern basal wall (U.17). Like the platform's facings, U.13 slopes up toward the structure at an angle of roughly 30 degrees.

The U.14 (western) steps are flanked on the north and south by two large, nearly identical stucco masks (U.16 and 15) each of which is built over a stone armature. Units 15 and 16 measure ca. 2.4m across north-south by 1.6m east-west and are dominated by a central, large, round bulbous nose 0.8-0.9m in diameter. The eyes flanking the dominant proboscis are ca. 0.6m wide by 0.3m deep, the entirety of each mask having approximately 0.7m of sculptured relief. Unit 15, the less well-preserved southern mask, was bisected revealing something of the construction methods. In this case, the core is built against the western platform facing (U.20) and consists of a cobble and charcoal-flecked-earth fill 0.35m in diameter and standing 0.35m high (this, and subsequent construction elements, are included in U.15). The core was then coated with ca. 12 plaster layers that are less than 0.01m to 0.02m thick. In some cases the plaster coatings are separated by earth, in others the layers are directly superimposed. Subsequently, the nose and eye sockets were added to the core, these elements being formed of rock and earth fill coated with up to 50 thin plaster layers. Fragments of what seem to be earflares were noted adjoining, and slightly below, the eyes. These, too, were made from stone-and-earth armatures coated with plaster. The best preserved example, below U.16's right (north) eye is 0.45m in diameter. Units 15 and 16 closely resemble a similar, but much-disturbed, stucco mask found on the west side of neighboring Str. 144-18-1st (U.5). It seems that, whatever significance these elaborate masks had for Site 144's residents, they were somehow linked to the westward, outward, facing sides of two of the center's most prominent edifices. In addition, the juxtaposition of U.15, 16, and the U.14 steps strongly suggests that Str. 144-8-2nd's formal entryway was on its western axis, the stairs leading to the red-painted segment of U.21 on the summit.

Structure 144-8-2nd's summit seems to have been featureless. Five flat-laid, large (ca, 0.2-0.3m diameter) cobbles are set at the superstructure's corners with the fifth exactly half-way between the northeast and southeast corners (all included in U.11). Like their counterparts described for TS.2, these stones may have been bases used to support poles that sustained the roof. A similar rock was anticipated in the center of the superstructure's western line but was not found. Either it has been dislodged or another arrangement for supporting the roof was employed in what was apparently the main entryway (overlooking the U.14 steps). Outside of the putative U.11 pole bases there was no sign of superstructure architecture. The absence of stone footings on the summit may imply that this area was roofed but not bordered by walls; alternatively, perishable superstructure walls may have been set directly along the U.21 floor's margins.

Structure 144-8-2nd is a 0.6m-high earth-and-stone-filled platform bounded by stone facings set at an angle of ca. 30 degrees back from vertical; at least the bases of these units were coated with plaster. The building continues its predecessor's orientation (roughly 351 degrees) and still covers 84m². Though the summit could be accessed by passing up a southern, plaster-covered ramp, the main entryway was on the west where there are two plaster-coated steps located at the building's mid-point. This staircase is flanked by two large stucco masks characterized by prominent, bulbous noses, deep-set eyes and earflares. Both masks were apparently resurfaced many times (50 sequentially applied plaster coatings were recorded) suggesting that they were exposed for a considerable span (probably throughout TS.4). The western stairs, in turn, give way to a featureless but extensive (4.7x11m; 51.7m²) plaster-covered summit. This space was apparently roofed, its supports standing 2.5m (on the north and south) and 4.5m apart (on the east). The plaster floor was painted red over its central 3.4m², the remainder of the surface to the north and south apparently having been left white.

All TS.3 basal walls and fill consists of river-rounded stones set in a mud mortar. As in TS.2, the plaster seems to have been fashioned from limestone.

Time Span 4

During this interval, Str. 144-8's height was raised through the addition of ca. 0.5m of earth-and-cobble fill (U.22). This addition was capped by a thin, highly eroded plaster floor that shows no clear signs of red painting (U.23). The rest of the building remained intact, the masks (U.15 and 16) and western steps (U.14) still exposed as was the southern ramp (U.13); presumably, U.14 was expanded by at least one riser to achieve the newly enhanced summit, though no clear signs of this addition were noted. As was the case with its predecessor, Str. 144-8-1st's summit was apparently featureless. It is unclear whether the U.11 post bases recorded during TS. 3 were still used as such or were replaced by other similar constructions that were not found in situ.

Structure 144-8-1st was now a 1.1m-high stone-faced platform that was still oriented ca. 351 degrees and encompassed 84m². The basal facings of the last phase are not well preserved, but seem to have been battered back at 30 degrees and covered with white plaster. The extensive summit covers 50.8m² (ca. 4.5x11.3m) and was surfaced with white plaster. The western entryway was still flanked by two large stucco masks (U.15 and 16) while a more informal means of accessing the summit was achieved by traveling up the southern ramp (U.13).

All TS.4 architecture consists of river cobbles set in a mud mortar. The plaster used in this span was seemingly made from limestone.

Time Span 5

Following abandonment, Str. 144-8-1st was covered by the gradual deposition of 0.3-0.6m of a brown soil (S.3) that blanketed Str. 144-8-1st. A few scattered stones fallen from final-phase architecture (F.1) were found embedded in S.3.

Structure 144-11

Structure 144-11 occupies the patio's southeast corner, ca. 20m east-northeast of Str. 9 and 14m south of Str. 10. The land on which Str. 144-11 is located is generally flat, dropping 0.15m across 13m west-to-east. Excavations conducted here as Subop. 144E uncovered all of Str. 11, resulting in the exposure of 48m². Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 0.63m and 0.45m outside and within the limits of construction, respectively, revealing one building phase and the presence of an earlier edifice partially covered by Str. 144-11-1st. These investigations, conducted with in Subop. 144E, were directed by M. Turek.

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	-	LCLIII/EPC
2	Str. 144-11-Sub1	U.1	-	-	LPC
3	Str. 144-11-1st	U.2-18	-	F.1	LPC
4	-	-	S.1, 2	F.2	-

Time Span 1

Time Span 1 witnesses the deposition of S.1, a dark yellowish-brown soil (10YR 4/4) that underlies construction by approximately 0.3m (the base of this layer was not encountered during our excavations). The recovery of artifacts from within this portion of S.1 points to human occupation in the vicinity prior to the erections of Strs. 144-11-Sub1 and 144-11-1st.

Time Span 2

Structure 144-11-Sub1 is represented solely by U.1, a 0.1m-high (preserved) by 0.5m-wide stone wall that runs beneath Str. 144-11-1st's north basal wall (U.5). Unit 1 terminates 1.15m north of U.5 and its apparent southern limit was identified 1.45m south of that northern facing. Composed of a mixture of river cobbles (primarily) and angular stones, U.1 is oriented roughly 344 degrees. The limited exposure restricts what can be inferred concerning Str. 144-11-Sub1's form and dimensions; at present we tentatively reconstruct this building as a modest edifice superseded by Str. 144-11-1st during TS.3. Unit 1 may rest on the U.17 fill (described below) that underlies and elevates Str. 144-11-1st, though this relationship is presently unclear. The absence of a corner on the north end at least suggests that U.1 was not the basal facing of a platform.

Time Span 3

The core of Str. 144-11-1st is a long, narrow stone surface (U.7) covering 1.6x6.8m and bounded on all sides by low (ca. 0.25m deep) walls (U.3-6) that extend below, but do not rise above, the top of U.7. A change in construction suggests that U.7 may have been expanded 1.75m south sometime during TS.3 through the addition of U.8-10. This extension buried U.7's previous southern margin (U.3). Located ca. 0.1m east of U.7 is a 0.14-0.17m-high by 0.17m-wide stone wall (U.2) that runs for 2.7m parallel to U.7's eastern border (U.4). Unit 2 is located slightly south of Str. 144-11-1st's center-line, beginning 3.65m south of the building's northeast corner and ending 2.15m north of its southeast corner (on the putative southern addition). Unit 11, in turn, is a ca. 0.3m-high by 0.2m-wide wall that lies 0.3m south of U.7's south extension and runs 4.1m east-west parallel to that extension's southern margin (U.9). Unit 11 ends in line with U.7's southeast corner but extends 2.5m west of that pavement's southwest corner. Located 0.2m north of U.11 and 0.55m west of U.7's southwest corner is U.12, a ca. 0.3m-high by 0.15m-wide wall. Unit 12 runs 1.7m east-west parallel to U.11, stopping just shy of the latter's western edge. Unit 18 is appended to U.11's south face. Beginning 1.8m east of U.11's western end, this stone-faced construction seems to be roughly the same height as U.11. Unit 18 is widest on the west, where it measures 0.6m across over an east-west distance of 1.55m before narrowing to the 0.2m width it maintains to its terminus at U.11's eastern edge.

A scant 0.1m north of U.12 is a dense concentration of organic remains (primarily *Pachychilus* sp. shells) mixed with a few pottery fragments (F.1). Feature 1, maximally 0.15m thick, covers 0.8x1.1m, and is delimited by three low, discontinuous stone constructions, 0.15-0.45m wide, on all sides (U.13-15). This deposit is 0.35m west of U.7. A plaster surface (U.16) lies 0.2m west of U.7 and 0.15m north of the F.1/U.13-15 concentration. Unit 16 is across U.7 from U.2, both located slightly south of Str. 144-11-1st's axis. Though U.16's western margin is poorly preserved, it appears that the floor originally measured approximately 1.25m east-west by 2.1m north-south. Unit 16 was resurfaced at least once; the basal preserved layer was painted red and polished while its successor, resting on 0.01m of earth fill, was too eroded to determine if it was finished in a similar manner.

The construction units described above sit on a low earth platform composed of a yellowish-brown soil (U.17) indistinguishable from S.1 (10YR 4/4). The margins of U.17 are not clear nor is its perimeter delimited by stone facings. Instead, it seems that roughly 0.2m of this soil was introduced to elevate Str. 144-11-1st above ancient ground surface without much care being taken to formally define the platform's limits.

Structure 144-11-1st ended TS.3 as a stone-paved building oriented ca. 349 degrees, covering 13.7m², and fronted on the west, patio-facing side by a 2.6m² plaster surface set on earth (the U.17 fill). This floor likely marks Str. 144-11-1st's formal entryway. Immediately south of this entrance is a dense concentration of shell that may have been a small midden or a cache of material that figured in some other activity on and around the structure. Low, narrow walls border the edifice's southern and parts of its eastern flanks. In the former case, two such walls are separated by 0.2m while on the east a similar distance separates the wall from Str. 144-11-1st's stone paving. These constructions might have been footings for perishable upper constructions that shielded Str. 144-11-1st and its occupants from view and the elements. The above complex was elevated approximately 0.2m above ground surface atop an earthen platform that lacked discernible boundaries when excavated.

All construction units associated with Str. 144-11-1st were fashioned of unmodified river cobbles (for the most part) and angular rocks. In most cases, these stones were laid flat. The exceptions are U.2, 11, and 12, the low, narrow walls situated on Str. 144-11-1st's eastern and southern margins. Here, the rocks were set on end. A mud mortar was used as a binding agent in all stone constructions here.

Time Span 4

Following Str. 144-11-1st's abandonment, the building was covered by the continued deposition of S.1 and the addition of S.2. Approximately 0.3m more of S.1 was laid down now along with 0.04-0.11m of S.2, a brown/dark brown soil (10YR 4/3). A very light scattering of stones fallen from construction (F.2) was recorded extending 0.43m east of U.2. The paucity of rocks in F.2 implies that relatively few stones were used in final-phase (TS.3) construction.

Structure 144-18

Structure 144-18 is the northern member of a pair of buildings (the southern partner being Structure 144-8) that together seal off the west side of the patio. Structure 144-8 is 2.9m to the south while Str. 144-5 is ca. 18m to the north-northeast. Activities predating the 1996 field season, specifically the cutting of a road through the site using mechanical equipment, truncated Str. 144-18's east side leaving relatively little architecture intact. There also seems to have been a concerted effort to plane off much of the platform's summit, obliterating any evidence of superstructure architecture in the process. Working with architectural remains on the relatively well preserved western flank as well as with surviving remnants on the other sides permits reconstruction of Str. 144-8-1st's basal dimensions, orientation, and something of the decoration that once adorned its western face. Fully 89m² were cleared here within Subop. 144B, Q, and DD in the course of exposing the entirety of Str. 144-18-1st's surviving basal walls. Digging was pursued to a maximum depth of 0.34m below modern ground surface revealing one building phase, though others may well have existed. Destruction of the platform's core precludes reconstructing its construction history with any surety; there may well have been earlier versions of the building that are now beyond our reach. The investigation of Str. 144-18 was directed by J. Mooney and S. Moorehead.

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	Str. 144-18-1st Str. 144-Sub1	U.1-7 U.8	-	-	LPC
2	-	-	-	F.1	-

Time Span 1

Structure 144-18-1st is a ca. 2.5m-high platform (based on estimates made when the site

was mapped in 1978) delimited by plaster-surfaced stone basal foundations on all sides (U.1-4). Extrapolating from the better preserved western facing, it appears that these walls originally rose at an angle of ca. 33 degrees, though the final height they achieved is unknown. A stone-faced outset (U.6) projects 0.35m west of the western basal facing (U.3). Unit 6 is 1.4m north, and 3.75m south, of the platform's southwest and northwest corners, respectively. Near U.6's northwest corner, and built against U.3, are the fragmentary remains of a stucco mask (U.5) that runs 2.6m north-south and extends 1.2m west of the basal wall. Though the upper portions of U.5 were sheared off during recent construction, the surviving lower segment has the bulbous nose so distinctive of the better preserved stucco masks on Strs. 144-8-2nd and 1st. Said proboscis measures 0.65m in diameter and is flanked by two eye slits covering roughly 0.6m across. Unit 5 seems to have been fashioned in much the same way as were its counterparts on Strs. 144-8-2nd and 1st, with stucco applied over a stone armature. So much of U.5 was damaged before it could be studied that little more can be said about its fashioning. The reader, therefore, is directed to the discussion of the masks on Strs. 144-8-2nd and 1st for more details of the construction process. The platform fill (U.7) contained by U.1-4 is presumed to have been similar to the hearting of Str. 144-8-1st based, in part, on the few surviving remnants of the core still standing when Str. 144-18-1st was studied. Scattered remnants of white plaster, some of which were painted red, found on and around Str. 144-18-1st tentatively imply that the building's summit was surfaced in a manner similar to that seen on Strs. 144-8-2nd and 1st.

Structure 144-Sub1 is represented by a cobble wall (U.8) located 1.6m west of U.6. This low, 0.2m-wide construction is aligned roughly 347 degrees and seems to have been part of a surface-level building whose use coincides with that of Str. 144-18-1st. Only 1.3m of U.8 were exposed. Unit 8 may have been part of Str. 144-4, originally mapped ca. 7m west of Str. 144-18. By the time excavations were conducted in 1996, Str. 144-4 was no longer apparent on ground surface. Given the proximity of U.8 to Str. 144-18-1st, however, it seems more likely that it is part of a casual construction raised between this building and its western neighbor rather than a part of Str. 144-4.

Overall, Structure 144-18-1st is a stone-faced and -filled platform measuring 7.7x10.7m, oriented ca. 339 degrees, and, based on observations made during the original mapping of the site in 1978, it may have stood as much as 2.5m tall. The building apparently faced west where it was decorated with at least one stucco mask of a figure with a large nose. The stone outset (U.6) which the mask flanks on the north may have been the basal riser of a staircase leading up to the platform's summit. The latter was possibly surfaced with plaster, some of which was painted red. Structure 144-18-1st's basal facings were apparently coated with white plaster as well. Lying 1.6m west of the platform is an apparent surface-level construction.

The stones employed in the construction of Str. 144-18-1st are mostly river-worn cobbles set in a mud matrix. The plaster seems to have been fashioned from limestone.

Time Span 2

Following abandonment, Str. 144-18-1st was presumably buried by soil deposition. Most of that earthen mantle, however, had been ripped away by earth-moving activities, activities that also truncated the platform's height and precipitated the cascading of building debris (F.1) from

all sides of the structure.

Structure 144-19

Structure 144-19 was not identified during the initial mapping of the settlement during the 1978 field season. After most of the vegetation was removed concomitant with the founding of a small modern community on the site in late 1995, Str. 144-19 emerged from obscurity to assume its place as an enigma. Located 15.5m east/northeast of Str. 144-8, Str. 144-19 appeared on the surface to be an extensive (7.2x15.1m), low platform oriented northwest-southeast. Excavations here were limited to a 1x14m trench cut across the building's axis from southwest to northeast (oriented 64 degrees, 14m² cleared in Subop. 144J). Digging was carried down to maximum depths of 0.5m and 0.58m below modern ground surface within and outside the inferred limits of construction, respectively, in an effort to identify said construction. These investigations were directed with considerable patience by M. Turek.

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	-	EPC?
2	Str. 144-19-1st?	U.1?	-	-	LPC
3	-	-	S.2	-	-

Time Span 1

This span witnessed the deposition of S.1, a yellowish-brown (10YR 5/6), hard-compacted soil that was revealed to maximum thicknesses of 0.16m and 0.17m on the southwest and northeast ends of Subop. 144J, respectively (S.1's base lies beyond our excavation limits). Stratum 1 appears in two discontinuous segments, extending 3.74m northeast from the southwest trench margin before disappearing for 7.1m, reappearing for 2.16m near the northeastern terminus of Subop. 144J. Stratum 1's upper surface runs more-or-less flat, its top rising 0.05m from southwest to northeast. The layer's discontinuous distribution seems to result from a dip exposed in the middle of Subop. 144J, though whether this is a consequence of human or natural processes is unclear.

Roughly 0.15m of S.2, a lightly compacted, yellowish-brown (10YR 5/4) soil, covers S.1 and underlies U.1. Stratum 2 looks like a slightly modified upward continuation of S.1, probably deposited under conditions similar to those that prevailed when the latter was introduced. There is no sign of a depression in S.2, however, and this earth level apparently filled in the dip that formed in S.1.

Recovery of some artifacts from S.1 and lower S.2 imply a human presence in the area when these earth layers were deposited.

Time Span 2

Str. 144-19-1st might have been an earthen platform whose core (U.1) is composed of a mixture of brown/dark brown (10YR 4/3) loosely consolidated soil and a few river cobbles accompanied by considerable quantities of cultural material, including ceramic fragments, bajareque, and plaster flecks. Unit 1 overlies S.2, is 0.49m thick at its center, and thins out to 0.18-0.34m thick on its exposed northeast and southwest margins. The dark color of this fill, suggesting a relatively high organic content. This, coupled with the relatively dense concentration of artifacts within U.1, implies that this entity consists of redeposited midden material. Though a few rocks are widely dispersed in U.1, there were no indications of formalized stone facings.

Overall, Str. 144-19-1st is 0.49m-high and measured at least 7.3m southwest-northeast (the observed, clear limits of U.1). There are no signs of construction on Str. 144-19-1st's putative earthen-floored summit. It may well be that Str. 144-19-1st is less a building than a pile of trash resulting from activities conducted in the main plaza.

Time Span 3

Structure 144-19-1st's northeast and southwest flanks were covered by the continued deposition of S.2 following the edifice's abandonment. Roughly 0.2-0.3m of S.2 was deposited over this protracted interval. Unit 1's summit was not covered by this earth level, remaining exposed until excavated in 1996.

Test Pit Program

Site 144's constructions apparently comprise the center of an extensive settlement. Artifacts are found scattered over an area of, very roughly, 41,000m², around the central patio. Twelve surface concentrations of artifacts (primarily ceramics) and, occasionally, snail shells (*Pachychilus* sp., or "jutes"), 3-6m in diameter, were noted in those spots where the vegetation permitted direct observation of ground surface. Our experience with excavating similar scatters at Site 306 (Viejo Brisas del Valle) on the Rio Chamelecon's north bank just northeast of the Naco valley, suggested that these concentrations were the remains of shallow middens associated with surface-level perishable structures. In order to assess the extent and nature of occupation and activities unassociated with physically salient architecture, 40 test pits (Subop. 144U-Z, AA-AE, AF, AG, AH, AI, AJ, AK, AL, AQ, AM, AN, AO, AP, AR, AS, AT, AU, AV, AW, AX, AY, AZ, BC, BD, BE, BF, BG, BH, BI, BJ, BK, BL, BM, BN, BO, BP, BQ, BR, BS, BT, BU, BV, BW, BX, BY, BZ, CD, CE, CF, CG, CH, CI, CJ, CK, and CL) were dug within artifact concentrations and along transects laid out from Site 144's center. These probes measured 0.5x0.5m and 1x1m and were dug to depths of 0.2-0.9m below modern ground surface; all but one reached 0.4m below ground surface. Excavations were pursued until no artifacts were found for at least 0.1m.

No architecture was encountered in these tests though cultural material, especially pottery sherds, lithics (obsidian and, to a lesser extent, chert) and snail shells (*Pachychilus* sp.), was recovered up to 0.6m below modern ground surface. Though most of this material dates to the

Early and Late Postclassic, scattered evidence of Middle and Late Preclassic settlement in the area was recorded along with somewhat more robust signs of Terminal Classic occupation.

(A summary of the excavations conducted at Site 144 can be found in Schortman and Urban 2011.)

Chronological Summary

Fragmentary signs of a human presence in Site 144's environs date from the Middle Preclassic through Late Classic. The earliest evidence for occupation in what would become the center's architectural core, however, pertains to Late Classic III (Terminal Classic). A few ceramics diagnostic of this interval were found mixed with later material near Strs. 144-1, 2, 8, and 11. This span is also well-represented in the test-pit sample, implying intensified use of this area during Late Classic III. Such an increase in the prevalence of Late Classic III remains may correlate with the demographic and political florescence experienced at this time by Site 128 ca. 250m to the northeast.

Early Postclassic ceramic diagnostics are more common in both the test-pitting sample and the excavations conducted within Site 144's principal patio than are those of any earlier periods. The environs of Strs. 144-1, 2, 8, 11, and 19 apparently were in use by this period. All of the investigated buildings, however, were erected and rebuilt during the Late Postclassic, a span which is also very well represented in the test-pit sample. There is little doubt that these final precolumbian centuries witnessed a significant increase in Site 144's political importance, as indicated by the construction of such imposing (by the standards of the place and time) edifices as Strs. 144-8 and -18. That Late Postclassic and Early Postclassic ceramic markers were found in roughly equivalent numbers in the test-pitting program may imply that population at the center did not rise dramatically throughout this span.

There was no evidence of Colonial or other Early Historic occupation on and around Site 144 and the settlement seems to have been abandoned until the last years of the 20th century.

References Cited

Schortman, E. and P. Urban
2011 *Networks of Power in the Late Postclassic Naco Valley, Northwestern Honduras*.
University Press of Colorado, Boulder.