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PVN OP 033 Excavation Report

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Operation 33

Operation 33 encompasses 12 structures of various sizes occupying the summit, and built into the eastern flank, of a 2m-high rise bordering La Sierra's site core on the west. The ground drops off steeply on the west, descending 3.6m over 12m east-to-west, as well as on the north. Four monumental edifices (Strs. 1A-1, 1A-2, 1A-3, and 1A-4), which define the western flank of the site core, are included in this operation along with 8 modest constructions that define a patio immediately west of their larger counterparts. Excavations were conducted here for two-and-a-half months in 1990 under the direction of Colleen Siders and John Douglass (Subop. 33A-M). Together, they oversaw the uncovering of 209m² on and around four buildings; one monumental edifice (Str. 1A-3) and three smaller constructions (Strs. 1A-20, 1A-21, and 1A-23).

Structure 1A-3

Structure 1A-3 is a monumental platform lying ca. 12m west of Str. 1A-13 (Op. 25) and joined by construction to Strs. 1A-2 and 1A-4 on the north and south, respectively. Together with Str. 1A-1, about 20m north of Str. 1A-3, these buildings define the western limits of the La Sierra site core. Structures 1A-2, 1A-3, and 1A-4 are all built into an east-to-west ascent that is part of the high river terrace which runs south and southeast from here supporting much of southern La Sierra. The ground rises approximately 2m over 15m from east to west under Str. 1A-3, making the edifice's east, plaza-facing side far more impressive than its much shorter western flank. A total of 50m² was cleared in the course of investigating Str. 1A-3; a trench was cut east-west completely across the building (Subop. 33E, G) in addition to excavations set against the west and north flanks (Subop. 33F and K, respectively). Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 1.26m and 0.74m below modern ground surface outside and within architecture, respectively. One major construction phase was revealed in the course of this work which was ably directed by Colleen Siders.

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	F.2	LCL I, II
2	Str. 1A-3-1st Str. 1A-3-Sub1	U.1-25, 32-35 - U.27-30	-	-	LCL II/III
3	Str. 1A-3-1st	U.26, 31	-	F.3	LCL III/II
4	-	-	S.1, 2, 4	F.1	

Time Span 1

At least 0.18m of S.3 (its base was not found), a moderately hard-compacted, fine-textured, yellow-tan soil, was laid down now. Stratum 3 underlies Str. 1A-3-1st's western basal

architecture (U.15) and runs more-or-less flat for 1.9m east-to-west before ascending 0.19m over 1m in that direction. Stratum 3 then levels off for the remaining 0.38m it was exposed running to the west, disappearing beneath Str. 1A-3-Sub1. It appears, therefore, that Str. 1A-3-1st's west flank was set into a shallow (0.19m-deep) depression while Str. 1A-3-Sub1 was perched atop the western crest of that declivity.

A 0.13m-thick layer of burnt earth (F.2) overlies S.3 from below U.15 and extending east for an exposed 0.7m (its eastern limit was not revealed). Sherds embedded in the top of F.2 point to a cultural source of the burning, though it is unclear whether this surface was intentionally fired to harden the surface or accidentally burnt.

Time Span 2

During this interval Str. 1A-3-1st reached close to its final form. The platform is ascended on the east, plaza-facing side by six stone-faced terraces (U.3-7, 10) leading to a step-up to the summit (U.8). A hard, white plaster floor (U.1), underlain for at least 0.1m by small pebbles, fronts the building on this side. Unit 1 extends for 3.76m eastward from a point 1.56m west of U.10, the basal eastern terrace, and continues beyond the eastern limits of our excavations. Unit 10, therefore, rests on U.1. The former is a 0.2m-high, 0.9m-wide stone-faced construction that is succeeded on the west by U.3. One of the exposed U.10 stones, a cut block, had white plaster on its exposed surface. This suggests that at least this basal riser was originally covered with plaster, possibly lipping up from U.1. The poor state of preservation in which U.10 was found makes it difficult to be certain about the relationship between U.1 and 10. Unit 3, the next ascending terrace, rises 0.35m above U.10 and measures roughly 1m across east-west. The fill underlying U.3 and 10 (U.2) consists of a densely packed concentration of medium to small cobbles set in an earth matrix. On the exposed western edge of U.2 the soil is a fine-textured, loosely consolidated, very light tan that slopes up 0.45m over 0.54m east-to-west. East of this point the matrix consists of a moderately fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, brown soil. The significance of this difference in the soils making up U.2 is unclear. Unit 4, the third ascending terrace, is 0.35m high by 0.8m wide and is succeeded by U.5, a 0.76m high riser the tread of which encompasses 1.2m across. Unit 6 rises 0.54m above U.5 and runs 1.41m back to U.7. The latter ascends 0.56m above U.6 and is 1.68m wide.

The summit step-up, U.8, is 0.52m tall by 0.56m thick and is the eastern border of a room that covers 3.25m east-west by, minimally, 2.65m north-south (the enclosure's south, but not its north, end was encountered). Bounding this space on the south are two stone foundations (U.12 and 34) separated by a gap measuring 1.34m across. The eastern member of the pair, U.12, is 0.3m high while its western counterpart, U.34, rises 0.46m above the summit floor; the full width of neither footing was revealed. A stone apparently fallen from U.12 had a small fragment of white plaster adhering to its surface, hinting at the broader application of this embellishment on this superstructure's walls. The space separating U.12 and 34 likely marks a door into the compartment from the south. Units 11 and 13 bound the room on the west. The former is 0.4-0.67m wide, expanding to the south where it intersects U.34 and forms the room's southwest corner. Unit 34 runs over the top of, and rests on, U.11 which is 0.2-0.31m high. Unit 13, in turn, succeeds U.11 on the north, continuing for roughly 8.7m in this direction (based on two discontinuously exposed segments of the wall). This footing is 0.36m high by 0.6m wide.

Units 11 and 13 do not form one continuous line north-south; the latter is set back (west) 0.35m from the east face of the former. The significance of this jog is not apparent. The summit room's floor was apparently surfaced with white plaster (U.32 and 33). Though only surviving in fragments when excavated, the lower of these floors (U.32) was 0.01m thick; U.33 is about the same thickness and is 0.18m above its predecessor. Most likely U.33 was added after the summit floor was raised slightly, though this addition does not seem to have been part of a larger renovation of the superstructure.

A very limited portion of the fill (U.21) underlying the summit was exposed. Unit 21 is a fine-textured, loosely compacted, very light tan soil revealed to a maximum thickness of 0.24m beneath the approximate center of the investigated summit room. Unit 21 is identical to U.2 underlying U.3 on the east. Another fill deposit, U.9, was uncovered extending 0.67m east, and below the base, of the U.8 summit step-up. Unit 9 is a fine-textured, hard-compacted, gray ash that is at least 0.12m thick (its base lies beyond our excavation limits). Most likely, Structure 1A-3-1st's hearth consists of a mixture of different soils, some of which (such as U.9) at least derive from earlier middens.

Structure 1A-3-1st's western flank is mounted by three terraces (U.24, 25, and 35) leading to the summit step-up (U.14). Unit 24 is a 0.18m-high by 1.41m-wide riser that, in turn, is succeeded by U.25. The latter rises 0.77m above U.24 and extends 0.58m back (east) to U.35. Unit 35 ascends 0.12m above U.25 and measures 0.64m across east-west. Unit 14, the summit step-up, is 0.35m tall and may be the western face of U.11 and 13 on the east. If so, this would make the U.11/13/14 complex 1.4-1.68m wide, broad enough to have doubled as a wall foundation and bench.

A 0.47m-high construction (U.15) projects 0.75-1m west from U.25 and rests on the surface backing U.24, the western basal riser. Unit 15 widens slightly from its exposed northern end to the point 2.6m to the south where it enters our excavation limits. Unit 25 still projected 0.3m above U.15 where the latter fronted the former. Unit 25 is distinguished from other constructions associated with Str. 1A-3-1st as it is made of cut blocks set on end.

The material backing and underlying the western constructions is a mix of earth and stones. The lowest fill (U.22) is a fine-textured, hard-compacted, gray soil that overrides S.3 and slopes up 0.31m over 2.26m west-to-east from behind (east of) U.24. Unit 22 is about 0.1m thick and is blanketed by U.23 a dense packing of medium to small cobbles set in a moderately coarse-textured, hard-compacted, reddish-brown soil. Unit 23 underlies and runs behind U.15, 25, and 35.

Three terraces (U.16-18) ascend Str. 1A-3-1st's north face succeeded by a low step-up to the summit (U.19). These constructions are fronted on the north by a floor of burnt earth (U.20) that extends at least 1.4m from the basal northern riser, U.16 (U.20's northern limit was not found). Unit 16 stands 0.42m above U.20 and runs 0.57m back to the south where it is succeeded by U.17. The latter is 0.33m high by 0.6m wide north-south and gives way to the 0.3m high riser of U.18. Unit 18 is 2.9m wide and terminates at U.19, the 0.22m-high step-up to the summit.

Overall, Structure 1A-3-1st is a 3m- and 1m-high (on the east and west, respectively) stone-faced, earth-and-stone-filled platform that measures 15.2m east-west by at least 19.3m north-south, and is aligned roughly 327 degrees. Six terraces ascend the platform's east, plaza-facing side while three risers mount its western and northern flanks. A white plaster floor fronts the building on the east while a burnt earth surface extends north from the platform's northern facing; no prepared surface was recorded on the west. A 0.47m-high stone-faced projection (U.15) extends 0.75-1m west from the second ascending western terrace onto the tread of the basal western riser, running at least 2.6m north-south. The exposed terraces on all sides are generally low, 0.12-0.77m high, and range in width from 0.57-2.9m. The three most consistently diminutive (0.3-0.42m wide) terraces ascend Str. 1A-3-1st's north flank and would have provided an easy ascent to the summit. The western terraces, 0.18-0.47m high (when including U.15 in the sequence) would also have provided a ready way of reaching the superstructure. The latter consists of at least one room bordered by stone foundations and entered through a 1.34m-wide gap near the center of its south wall. This compartment encompasses at least 8.6m². The superstructure's floor was covered with white plaster that was resurfaced at least once after the introduction of 0.18m of earth fill into the summit room. A 0.31m-high by 1.4-1.68m wide wall on the room's west side may have doubled as a bench and foundation. *If* the room's southern footings mark the limit of the superstructure in this direction, then this elevated space covers roughly 3.25x14.85m (48.3m²). How this area might have been subdivided, if at all, is unknown.

Structure 1A-3-1st's facings and foundations are generally made of unmodified river cobbles set in a hard earth mortar. The most striking exception to this pattern is the western outset, U.15, which is fashioned almost completely of masonry blocks set on end. Cut stones also comprise minority components of U.10, 12, 25, and 35 whereas two courses of masonry blocks surmount a cobble foundation on U.16, the northern basal terrace. It is possible that faced stones were more common on Str. 1A-3-1st than appeared to be the case during excavation. Specifically, the eastern terraces (U.3-7 and 10) were all very poorly preserved, to the point that it was difficult to distinguish their surviving remnants from tumbled debris (F.1). In Op. 25, Str. 1A-13-1st's terraces were in a comparable state of desuetude, only the lowest, most deeply embedded eastern riser preserving its masonry facing. Though hardly definitive, this line of evidence weakly suggests that any cut blocks that had graced the terraces on Strs. 1A-3-1st and 1A-13-1st were removed, leaving behind the cobble foundations for masonry upper courses or the fill that backed these cut stone facings.

At about the same time that Str. 1A-3-1st was erected, a much smaller platform (Str. 1A-3-Sub1) was being built 2.08m to the west. Structure 1A-3-Sub1 sits on S.3 and is a 0.3-0.4m-high stone-faced and -surfaced platform bound on its exposed north, east, and west sides by single ascents to the summit (U.27-29). The ground rises about 0.1m over 2.84m east-to-west, thereby accounting for Str. 1A-3-Sub1's slight height discrepancies. The north face (U.28) was completely exposed, measuring 2.7m along an alignment of ca. 70 degrees. Only 0.3m and 0.55m of the east and west flanks were revealed (U.29 and 27, respectively). The 0.3-0.55m of Str. 1A-3-Sub1's northern summit edge that was exposed revealed no superstructure architecture though shallow (0.16m deep) probes into the summit revealed a fill composed of densely packed stones set in a brown earth matrix (U.30).

Time Span 3

During this interval a 0.18-0.43m-thick deposit of small to medium-size cobbles and a very few cut blocks (U.26) was introduced west of U.15 and overlying U.24 on Str. 1A-3-1st's west side. Unit 26 extends 2.52m west of the U.15 outset, filling the entire distance between Str. 1A-3-1st and Str. 1A-3-Sub1. The stones comprising U.26 are set in two distinct soils; a moderately coarse-textured, hard-compacted, reddish brown soil (slanting down over 1.3m from U.15 on the east) and a moderately fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted brown soil over the rest of its western extent. The reddish-brown soil closely resembles the earth in which the U.23 stones that back U.15 are set; it may be that some of this material seeped out and infiltrated the eastern portion of U.26. Unit 31 is a very similar deposit that extends for an undetermined distance west of Str. 1A-3-Sub1. This fill deposit is 0.4m thick and was traced for 0.58m west of U.27, the diminutive platform's west facing. It appears that, near the end of the occupation spans of Str. 1A-3-1st and 1A-3-Sub1, an effort was made to link them through the addition of cobble fill. The result may have been a continuous stone surface burying Str. 1A-3-1st's basal western riser erected during TS. 2 and completely enveloping Str. 1A-3-Sub1.

On the east U.3-6 and 10 were seemingly buried by the introduction of a fill composed of densely packed small to large cobbles set in a brown earth matrix (F.3). Feature 3 is as much as 0.51m thick where it overlays U.3. The interpretation of F.3 as fill, and not just fallen architectural debris, is based on the large numbers of rocks involved and their horizontal dispositions; they do not seem to have fallen from further up the building. Feature 3 may have been introduced as a foundation for later construction that was never completed or as part of an effort to bury most of the platform's plaza-facing side. In either case, the deteriorated state of most of Str. 1A-3-1st's eastern terraces suggests that F.3 was laid down after these constructions had already undergone a significant degree of decay. There is no clear evidence that the platform's summit was sealed by the addition of fill and the superstructure may have continued in use during TS. 3.

By the conclusion of this interval Str. 1A-3-1st's east and west flanks were largely hidden by the addition of stone-and-earth fill, these deposits enveloping Str. 1A-3-Sub1 on the west as well. The outcome of these efforts would have been the conversion of the above buildings from distinct platforms into one extensive construction with indistinct flanks.

Time Span 4

Following abandonment of Strs. 1A-3-1st and 1A-3-Sub1, both edifices were gradually covered by the deposition of S.1 and 2. The latter is a moderately fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted brown soil that accumulated to a depth of as much as 0.42m over final-phase architecture. Stratum 1, a moderately fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, root-rich, dark brown soil, caps S.2 by 0.12-0.36m. On Str. 1A-3-1st's north side S.2 is replaced by S.4, a light reddish brown soil that slopes up 0.17m over 1.42m from north-to-south towards the building. Stratum 4 accumulated to depths of 0.06-0.23m atop the U.20 burnt earth floor; the layer's distinctive color likely results from intermixing with material from that floor. Embedded in S.1, 2, and 4 is a moderately dense concentration of stones dislodged from TS.2 architecture (F.1). Feature 1 is particularly dense where it overlies construction but was still traced for 2.2m east

and 1.4m north of construction (it was difficult to distinguish F.1 from U.26, 31, and F.3 on the west and east).

Structure 1A-20

Structure 1A-20, which closes off the northwest corner of the Op.33 patio, is 3m west of Str. 1A-3 and an equal distance north of Str. 1A-21. Excavations conducted here in Subops. 33A and L cleared roughly 42m² including most of the building's northeast and southeast sides. The southwest flank was exposed solely in a 1m-wide trench while the northwest portion of the building was not uncovered. Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 0.5m and 1.14m within and beyond architecture, respectively. One principal construction phase was identified in these investigations directed by J. Douglass under the supervision of C. Siders during the 1990 field season. L. Collins dug a test-trench (Subop. 27G) against Str. 1A-20's southeast flank during field operations in 1988.

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	-	-	S.2-3	-	
2	Str. 1A-20-1 st	U.1-23	-	-	
3	-	-	S.1	F.1	

Time Span 1

This interval was marked by the deposition of two soils (S.2 and 3). Stratum 3, the first to be laid down, is a gray-brown, soft-compacted, moderately fine-textured soil that contains numerous small pebbles. This layer is at least 0.34m thick where it was exposed southeast of construction (its base lies beyond excavation limits) and it rises 0.08m over 2.12m from southeast-to-northwest.

Stratum 2, a light brown, soft-compacted, fine-textured soil lacking the pebbles that characterized S.3, blankets S. 2 by 0.44-0.48m. Like its predecessor, S.2 ascends 0.08m over 2.12m from southeast to northwest. The presence of some small to medium-size stones in S.2, concentrated within 0.5m southeast of and below Str. 1A-20-1st's U.1, very tentatively implies that there might have been a construction which pre-dated the latter building and from which these rocks fell.

Time Span 2

Though poorly preserved when excavated in 1990, clearing of Str. 1A-20-1st revealed a building composed of at least 7 compartments (Rooms 1-7) situated at slightly different elevations. Structure 1A-20-1st was apparently not a platform like its near neighbors in the Op.

33 complex.

The largest compartment in Str. 1A-20-1st is Room 1. Measuring 2.2x2.8m (maximally), earthen-floored Room 1 was entered by stepping up and over a 0.1m-high by 0.38m-wide footing (U.1) that closes off the enclosure's southeast side. The rest of the compartment is bounded by stone foundations (U.2, 3, 4, and 23) that are 0.16-0.3m tall by 0.3-1m wide. The especially broad walls, U.2 (at least 0.8m across) on the southwest and U.3 (1m wide) on the southeast are sufficiently ample to have served as wall supports and benches or shelves. Unit 2 is 2m long northwest-southeast whereas U.3 encompasses 1.4m northeast-southwest. Built against Room 1's northwest side is a square block of stones (U.5) that stands 0.38m tall and measures 0.9x1m. Unit 5's dimensions suggest that it may have served as a shelf.

Lying 0.3m northwest of Room 1 are two cubicles (Rooms 3 and 4) set in a northeast-southwest line (the northwest edges of the two enclosures were not uncovered). These compartments are delimited by stone foundations (U.13-17) that are 0.35-0.4m tall by 0.3-0.7m wide. Room 3 on the northeast measures at least 1.05x1.5m and is floored with cobbles (U.21). Its neighbor on the southwest (Room 4) encompasses minimally 0.7x 0.94m and is also floored with stones (U.22). Neither Room 3 nor Room 4 contains built-in furniture in the portions that were exposed.

Room 2, which adjoins Room 1 on the northeast, is set atop a 0.19m-high step-up defined by U.6, 7, and 8 on the southeast, northeast, and northwest, respectively. Earthen-floored Room 2 covers 1.1x2.35m and was apparently open on the northeast and southeast. Lying 0.55m northwest of Room 2 is another segment of comparable elevation, this time delimited by U.9 and 10 on the southeast and northeast (the northwest facing, if there was one, was not exposed). This space is occupied by Room 7 and is immediately northeast of Room 3. The former compartment encompasses at least 1.4x2.45m and is divided into two narrow (northwest-southeast) segments by U.12. Unit 12 is a stone construction that is 0.11m tall by 0.39m across and runs from near Room 7's north corner to 0.3m shy of its south corner. A 0.2m-high terrace (U.11) fronts Rooms 2 and 7, running continuously for at least 3.5m northwest-southeast. Unit 11 extends back (southwest) to intersect the U.10 riser atop which Room 7 was raised. How and where U.11 might have run back to join Str. 1A-20-1st on the southeast were not determined; it likely joined with Room 2's northeast facing (U.7).

Structure 1A-20-1st's southwest margin is defined by a wall (U.20) that measures 0.65m across and stands an estimated 0.3m tall. Unit 20 is succeeded 0.3m to the northeast by a ca. 0.2m-tall stone step-up (U.19) to what may have been another two enclosures (Rooms 5 and 6). Units 20 and 19 were possibly parts of two terraces ascending from the southwest-to-northeast that served to stabilize Str. 1A-20-1st's southwest flank. The putative compartments lying northeast of U.19 were separated by a stone footing (U.18) that was an estimated 0.3m tall by 0.3m wide. Southeast of U.18, earthen-floored Room 5 borders Room 1 to the northeast. Room 6, in turn, would have been immediately southwest of Room 4. Not enough of the former compartment was exposed to even hazard a guess concerning its form and dimensions.

In general, Structure 1A-20-1st was apparently built atop ancient ground surface, facing into the patio to the southeast. Terraces built along the edifice's northeast and southwest sides

may have served to elevate its suite of rooms above land that was gently sloping up to the structure from those sides. Passage into the edifice from the patio (the southeast) seems, however, to have been direct and did not require any retaining walls. Structure 1A-20-1st during this interval measured 9.4m northeast-southwest by at least 5.1m southeast-northwest (the northwest margin was not investigated) and was aligned very roughly 327 degrees. The seven compartments that are inferred to have comprised Str. 1A-20-1st seem to have been set in two parallel lines running northeast-southwest. The largest known compartment (Room 1) has an earthen-floored interior that covers 5.5m² and was entered by stepping over a 0.1m-high wall composed exclusively of shaped blocks (U.1). Especially ample foundations on Room 1's southeast and southwest sides might have served as benches or shelves as well as being wall supports. A 0.38m-high stone block measuring 0.9x1m built against the compartment's northwest wall might have been yet another shelf. Bordering Room 1 on the northeast is an earthen-floored space (Room 2) covering 2.6m² and open over 0.19m-high stone-faced ascents on the northeast and southeast. Partially uncovered Room 5 borders Room 1 on the southwest but the former was insufficiently cleared to be sure of its size or form. Backing this trio of enclosures on the northwest are the partially cleared remnants of what may have been four cubicles also set in a northeast-southwest line. Room 7 on the northeast, like Room 2 to the southeast, is floored with earth and fronted on the northeast by a 0.19m-tall terrace-facing over which anyone within Room 7 would have had an unobstructed view. This enclosure covers 3.4m² and contains a 0.11m-high by 0.39m-wide stone wall that runs at a diagonal through the enclosure from near its north corner to a point 0.3m short of its south corner. The architectural significance of this construction is unclear. Running southwest from Room 2 are two stone-floored cubicles (Rooms 3 and 4) that encompass (minimally) 1.6m² and 0.7m² (moving from northeast-to-southwest). Room 6 may anchor this line of compartments on the southwest but only a very small fraction of this putative compartment was revealed.

Most TS.2 construction was fashioned primarily of river cobbles set in a mud mortar. As noted, U.1, which defines the southeast (patio-facing) side of Room 1 was made completely out of one course of masonry while faced blocks were found mixed with cobbles in U.4, 5, 6, 14, 17, and 23.

Time Span 3

After Str. 1A-20-1st's abandonment the building was largely covered by the deposition of at least 0.36m of a medium-brown, soft-compacted, moderately coarse-textured soil containing numerous small pebbles (S.1). Embedded in S.1 is a variably dense deposit of rocks that likely tumbled from final-phase architecture (F.1).

Structure 1A-21

Structure 1A-21, an extensive construction oriented roughly north-south, is located on the west side of the plaza defined by Str. 1A-3, about 18m to the northeast, Str. 1A-20, situated 3m to the north, and Str. 1A-23, lying 12.5m to the east-southeast. The terrain surrounding Str. 1A-21 rises: 3.6m over 12m west-to east; 0.14m across 2m east-to-west; and, 0.53m in the course of 31m from north-to-south. The building consists of a central platform from which what appeared to be low 'wings' project to the north and south. A trench (Subop. 33C) cut across the

approximate center of the middle platform while comparable excavations roughly bisected the north ‘wing’ (Subop. 33B) and Subop. 33M was set against the south ‘wing’s’ east face. Suboperations 33B, C, and M were all oriented roughly east-west. A series of linked trenches (Subop. 33H, I, and J) were dug across the entire complex running north-south. Most investigations were limited to these 1m-wide trenches, the poor preservation of most surviving architecture and limits on time precluding more extensive clearing. In all, approximately 107m² were excavated in and around Str. 1A-21, digging being carried down to maximum depths of 0.82m and 0.72m below modern ground surface outside and within construction, respectively. In order to facilitate the following discussion Str. 1A-21’s three segments will be described separately, each with its own sequence of numbered units, features, and strata. All of the Str. 1A-21 investigations were directed by C. Siders, assisted by J. Douglass.

Structure 1A-21-Central Platform (Str. 1A-21C)

This portion of Str. 1A-21 was investigated through excavations conducted in Subop. 33C and portions of 33H and J. The former was a trench that extended east-west across the building’s approximate center while Subop. 33 H and J are two components of the same trench that ran along the construction’s north-south axis. These excavations, both 1m wide, intersect in the approximate center of Str. 1A-21C. Roughly 32m² were cleared in the course of this work, excavations being pursued to maximum depths of 0.82m and 0.72m below modern ground surface outside and within construction, respectively. Two construction phases were uncovered 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>Dates</u>
1	-	-	S.3	-	
2	Str. 1A-21C-2 nd	U.1-2	-	F.1-2	
3	-	-	S.3	-	
4	Str. 1A-21C-1 st	U.3-21	-	-	
5	-	-	S.1-2	F.3-4	

Time Span 1

The earliest activity attested to in Str. 1A-21C’s immediate vicinity is the deposition of at least 0.4m of a tan, soft-compacted, fine-textured soil (S.3; this layer’s base was not revealed in our excavations). Stratum 3 rises 2.1m over 11m west-to-east west of construction; the layer was not pursued further under extant architecture on this side. Stratum 3 ran more-or-less even for the 1.5m it was traced east of Str. 1A-21C-1st. In short, S.3 seems to constitute a west-to-east ascent atop the western rim of which Str. 1A-21C was built.

Time Span 2

Structure 1A-21C-2nd is represented by two surviving stone elements (U. 1 and 2) raised on the edge of the S.3 west-to-east rise. Unit 1 is a 0.21m-high facing that was apparently set on S.3. A stone surface (included in U.1) runs back (east) for 0.8m where it is succeeded by a 0.22m-tall by 0.24m-wide stone wall (U.2). Though the final form and dimensions of the building elude us, Str. 1A-21C-2nd was likely a 0.21m-tall stone faced platform that supported at least one room bounded on the west by a 0.22m-high rock foundation for a perishable upper wall. The building was aligned roughly 3 degrees. Units 1 and 2 were fashioned of river cobbles set in a mud mortar.

Located 0.35m east of U.2 is F.1, a 0.1m-wide by 0.13m-tall burnt earth wall that was traced for 0.4m at an azimuth of, very approximately, 340 degrees. Feature 1 was associated with ash that was primarily concentrated within an irregular indentation in the element's top. No comparable features were identified at La Sierra or in the Naco valley and the entity's function is unclear.

Immediately adjoining F.1 on the east is what appears to be a cobble wall (F.2) that may have stood 0.27m high. Not enough of F.2 was revealed to determine if it was, indeed, a formal construction. If so, it might have defined the east side of a chamber delimited by U.2 on the west, making the earthen-floored compartment 0.46m wide. It could be that the investigated portion of Str. 1A-21C-2nd consisted of a low platform that supported an oven or other construction where fires were repeatedly set.

Time Span 3

Structure 1A-21C-2nd was blanketed by 0.1-0.26m of S.3. This addition continues the natural upward west-to-east trajectory of S.3 and may point to the resumption of depositional processes interrupted by Str. 1A-21C-2nd's construction.

Time Span 4

Stratum 3, where it overlies Str. 1A-21C-2nd, was then covered by 0.19-0.25m of a brown, moderately soft-compacted, coarse-textured soil (included in U.19). Though we cannot rule out the possibility that this soil was introduced naturally, its differences from S.3 and association with Str. 1A-21C-1st architecture (especially underlying U.8 and 20 and backing U.3) strongly suggest that U.19 was an integral part of that construction.

Structure 1A-21C-1st is delimited on the west and east by sizable platform facings (U.3 and 4). The former is 1.8m wide and stood to a preserved height of 1.2m on its downslope, west side. We estimate that U.3 originally was 1.8m high on the west. Unit 4, in turn, is 1.4m wide and at least 0.76m tall (its base was not definitively located). These height discrepancies are due to the uneven nature of the terrain over which Str. 1A-21C-1st was built. The northern and southern limits of the structure are defined by U.5 and 6. Only the uppermost 0.16-0.18m of these constructions were revealed.

Fronting the platform on the east, north, and south are stone-faced terraces (U.12, 14, and 13). The eastern basal terrace (U.12) is 1.62m wide, has a fill (U.18) made up of a mix of rocks and brown soil, and rises 0.22m above a projection (U.15) that extends 0.54m east of U.12. Unit 15 is 0.22m high, U.12 ascending an equal distance above this outset while U.4 protrudes an estimated 0.5m above its eastern terrace. Unit 11, lying 2.18m west of U.4's east face, marks the 0.26m-high step up to Str. 1A-21C-1st's summit on the east. Together, U.11, 12, and 15 may have been steps leading up to the platform's summit. Unit 14, the northern terrace, is 0.4m high by 2.22m wide and terminates in the 0.18m step-up to the summit marked by the top of U.5. The southern terrace (U.13) is 0.26m tall by 0.76m wide, succeeded on the north by the 0.16m-tall summit step-up comprised of U.6's top. A ca. 0.15m-high wall (U.21) runs for 1m at an angle of 344 degrees between U.13 and 6. The architectural significance of U.21 is unclear. The western edge of the summit was not well preserved. We infer that U.20 comprises the remnant of that ascent. Standing an inferred 0.4m tall, U. 20 is set on U.19 fill directly above Str. 1A-21C-2nd's U.2 and it is backed by a fill composed of a mix of cobbles and brown soil (U.16). *If* this interpretation is correct, then the distance from the western basal facing (U.3) to the western summit ascent (U.20) comprised a terrace ca. 4.4m wide.

Only limited portions of the platform's summit were revealed in our excavations. What these investigations tentatively suggest is that the superstructure consisted of one room measuring 6x7.06m. The compartment was apparently dominated by a 0.25m-high stone-faced bench that was built against the superstructure's west wall and which faces out over the putative eastern steps (the bench is defined by U.8, 10, 9, and 20 on the east, north, south, and west, respectively). This construction measures an estimated 1.72m wide east-west, 4.63m long north-south, and is surfaced with stones (U.7). The bench's fill is composed of densely packed small to medium-size cobbles set in a brown soil matrix (U.17). No signs of room dividers were noted atop Str. 1A-21C-1st.

By the conclusion of TS.4, Str. 1A-21C-1st was a 1.2-1.8m-tall platform covering 10.06x12.04m (not including the U.15 outset on the east) and oriented approximately 6 degrees. The platform is fronted on all sides by stone-faced terraces. The northern ascent is 0.4m high by 2.22m wide while its southern counterpart rises and 0.26m and measures 0.76m across. On the west the basal facing gives way to a 4.4m-wide surface that terminates in the summit step-up. The platform's summit was probably accessed from the east where four ascents (including the step-up to the summit) are 0.22-0.5m high by 0.54-2.18m wide. The superstructure revealed in our limited excavations apparently consists of a room covering 42m². The enclosure contains a 0.25m-high stone-faced and -surfaced bench that was built against the back (west) room wall and measured 1.72m wide (east-west) by 4.63m long (north-south).

All constructions comprising Str. 1A-21C-1st were made primarily of unmodified river cobbles set in a mud mortar. A few faced stones were found mixed in with the cobbles in U.3, 7, 9, and 21.

Time Span 5

Following its abandonment, most of Str. 1A-21C-1st was covered by 0.29-0.7m of a

brown, moderately soft-compacted, coarse-textured soil (S.2). Stratum 2 was, in turn, blanketed by 0.09-0.18m of a dark-brown-to-gray, moderately hard-compacted, moderately coarse-textured, root-rich soil (S.1). Embedded in S.1, but especially in S.2, are stones (F.3) that likely fell from terminal phase architecture. The density and extent of F.3 varies depending on the side of the structure where it is observed; almost none on the east, modest amount of building debris on the north and south, and much denser concentrations of tumbled rocks and artifacts on the steeply down-sloping west flank. On the last side F.3 extends for at least 7.52m away from Str. 1A-21C-1st's west basal wall (U.3). The rocks extending for 1.12m west of U.3 are so densely packed and flat-laid that they may comprise the remnants of a ca. 0.75m-tall casual construction (F.4) that was possibly erected to shore up the platform on its steeply down-sloping west flank. No signs of formal facings were found fronting F.4.

Structure 1A-21-South Platform (Str. 1A-21S)

Structure 1A-21S is 2.3m south of Str. 1A-21C-1st and was investigated by excavations conducted in Subop. 33H and M. The former was a trench that ran for 10m north-south across the approximate center of the platform whereas Subop. 33M was 4.8m long and was set against Str. 1A-21S's east side. In all, approximately 45m² was cleared in the process of uncovering most of the core platform and portions of a room lying immediately to the south (all included in Str. 1A-21S). Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 0.78m and 0.5m beyond and within construction, respectively. One major building phase was identified in the course of these investigations.

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	-	-	S.2-3	-	
2	Str. 1A-21S-1 st	U.1-15	-	F.1	
3	-	-	S.1	F.2	

Time Span 1

This interval was marked by the seemingly natural deposition of two earth layers. The lowest, S.3, is a brown-orange, very soft-compacted, fine-textured soil that was only exposed in the far eastern portion of Subop. 33M. Stratum 3 was uncovered to a maximum thickness of 0.08m (its base was not identified) and was traced for 0.68m over which it descended 0.08m from east-to-west.

Blanketing S.3 by 0.27-0.32m is an orange-brown, gritty soil that contains numerous fragments of *bajareque* and ceramics (S.2). Over the 1.64m Stratum 2 was revealed east of Str. 1A-21S-1st in Subop. 33M, this layer ran more-or-less flat. Structure 1A-21S-1st was raised atop S.2; the artifacts found throughout this soil point to a human presence in the area prior to that

construction.

Time Span 2

Structure 1A-21S-1st is a 0.64-0.77m-tall platform bordered by vertical stone facings on the north (U.1; this wall's base was not uncovered), west (U.4), and south (U.3). The situation on the east is less clear. Here excavations in Subop. 33M uncovered three stone steps (U.2, 5, and 6) that led up to an earthen-floored landing on the summit. The basal riser (U.2) is 0.22m tall by 0.88m wide, giving way to U.5 which rises 0.24 above the previous tread. Unit 5 measures 1.1m across and is succeeded by U.6 which ascends 0.27m to the summit. It may be that U.2 steps up as it continues south to define Str. 1A-21S-1st's eastern flank though excavation was not carried far enough in this direction to determine if this was the case.

Structure 1A-21S-1st's superstructure consists of an earthen-floored compartment (Room 1) measuring 1.85x2.8m. The enclosure was entered through a 0.6m-wide door in the north wall (U.13) that looks directly north to the landing bounded by U.6 on the east. What seems to have been a 1.5m-wide (east-west) by 0.15m-high stone-surfaced and –faced bench (U.7) borders the door on the east and takes up all of the compartment's east side. A ca. 0.3m-wide ash layer (F.1) was recorded running across Room 1 from its northwest towards the southeast corner. Feature 1 is 0.12-0.16m thick. Whether this ash was a byproduct of activities conducted in Room 1 or resulted from burning associated with its abandonment is unclear.

Built on ground surface immediately south of the platform is a compartment (Room 2) bound on all sides by low stone foundations (U.9-12) save the west where a stone block (U.8) closes off the earthen-floored space. Unit 8 encompasses 1.07x1.3m and the enclosure it helps to delimit measures 1.07x2.1m.

Lying 0.4m south of U.8 were two low stone walls (U.14 and 15) that may have defined the west and south sides of an earthen-floored cubicle (Room 3) erected against the south flank Room 2. If so, the compartment's interior measured 0.85x0.95m and was open to the east.

As TS.2 drew to a close, Str. 1A-21S-1st consisted of a 0.64-0.77m-high stone-faced platform with one, possibly two, surface-level rooms extending to the south. The core platform covered 3.8x6m and was aligned roughly 4 degrees. Three stone-faced steps ascended in increments of 0.22-0.27m from east-to-west leading to a landing immediately north of the single summit room (Room 1). The latter encompassed 5.2m² and was reached by passing through a 0.6m-wide door in its north face. Room 1's east side is bordered by a 0.15m-high stone-faced and –surfaced bench that is 1.5m wide and runs for the full length of the compartment (2.8m). A ca. 0.3m-wide by 0.12-0.16m-thick ash lens was recorded trending diagonally across Room 1 from its northwest corner. This deposit may suggest that the enclosure was used in activities that involved burning. The ash may also have resulted from a conflagration associated with Str. 1A-21S-1st's abandonment.

An earthen-floored compartment (Room 2) is built against the platform's south face. Covering 2.3m², Room 2 is bordered on the west by a square block of densely packed rocks covering 1.4m². A 0.4m-wide gap in Room 2's southwest corner may not have been ample

enough to provide human access to the interior though it might have served to allow the passage of air. An even smaller cubicle (Room 3) was set against Room 2. This last compartment encompasses 0.8m² and was probably open on the south.

All TS.2 construction was fashioned primarily of river cobbles set in a mud mortar. A notable exception is U.1 (the platform's northern basal facing) the 1m-wide exposed portion of which consists of two large cut blocks. A few masonry blocks were recorded as minority components of U.4.

Time Span 3

Following its abandonment, Str. 1A-21S-1st was largely buried by the deposition of a dark gray to brown, moderately hard-compacted, moderately coarse-textured soil (S.1). Stratum 1 accumulated to a maximum thickness of 0.5m over S.2 and final-phase architecture. Embedded in S.1 was a moderately light concentration of rocks that likely fell from Str. 1A-21-1st (F.2). Feature 2 was traced for 1.2m east of Str. 1A-21S-1st.

Structure 1A-21-North Platform (Str. 1A-21N)

Structure 1A-21N adjoins Str. 1A-21C, the latter's northern basal terrace (U.14) rising above the former's summit. Digging here uncovered ca. 30m², investigations being limited to 1m-wide exposures obtained in trenches that bisected the building running east-west (Subop. 33B) and north-south (33I). Excavations were pursued to maximum depths of 0.27m and 1m below modern ground surface within and beyond architecture, respectively. One major construction phase was identified 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>Dates</u>
1	-	-	S.2	-	
2	Str. 1A-21N-1 st	U.1-12	-	-	
3	-	-	S.1	F.1	

Time Span 1

During this interval a relatively fine-textured, light brown soil (S.2) was deposited. Stratum 2 appears to have underlain construction associated with Str. 1A-21N-1st.

Time Span 2

Structure 1A-21N-1st is ascended on the north by two stone-faced terraces (U.1-3). The basal riser (U.1) is 0.3m tall by 1.92m wide and is succeeded on the south by U.2. The latter

rises 0.23m above the U.1 tread and runs back 2.06m to the south where it terminates in U.3. The latter is 0.23m tall and defines the summit's north edge. The summit is paved with cobbles (U.4) and covers an estimated 1.5m (east-west) by 5.67m (north-south). On the east a 0.27m-high stone-faced terrace (U.5) fronts Str. 1A-21N-1st. Unit 5 is 3.2m-wide and gives way on the west to a 0.6m-tall ascent (U.6) to the U.4 summit floor. The situation on the steeply sloping west flank is less clear. Here what may have been the remnants of a ca. 0.5m-tall basal terrace (U.11) were tentatively identified 8.4m west of the summit's west edge (U.7). Unit 11 was very poorly preserved. If it ever existed, the tread was 4.35m wide and was succeeded on the east by U.10. The latter rises 1.7m above U.11 and, like its predecessor, had largely tumbled downslope prior to excavation. It may be that U.10 stood a full 1.7m tall or that there was at least one other terrace that intervened between U.10 and 11 and which was lost in the rubble found throughout this zone. Unit 10's tread is approximately 2.1m wide east-west and is succeeded by a ca. 0.4m tall terrace facing (U.9). Unit 9 is backed by a floor (U.8) composed of cobbles and schist slabs that leads back 1.85m east to U.7, the 0.2m-tall step up to the U.4 summit floor.

Running 2.5m east from its intersection with U.6's exposed north end is a ca. 0.5m-tall wall (U.12). Unit 12 was only exposed in the north wall of Subop. 33B and may mark a boundary between two spaces raised atop the broad eastern terrace.

By the end of TS.2, Str. 1A-21N-1st was a stone-faced platform that stood 0.76m, 0.87m, and an estimated 2.8m tall on the north, east, and west respectively. On the south, Str. 1A-21C-1st apparently rose directly above Str. 1A-21N-1st's summit. The edifice encompasses 8.7m east-west (from U.10 to U.5) by 9.63m north-south (U.1 to Str. 1A-21C-1st's U.14) and was aligned approximately 359 degrees. Two broad (1.92m and 2.06m) and low (0.3 and 0.23m tall) terraces grace the north face while one comparable construction standing 0.27m high and measuring 3.2m wide fronts the building's east side. The latter may have supported two earthen floored spaces separated by a low, east-west running wall that extends 2.5m east from the summit step-up (U.6). The steeply sloping west side was likely ascended by two terraces that were, from west to east, as much as 1.7m high by 2.1m wide and 0.4m tall by 1.85m across. The latter, upper terrace was surfaced with a mix of cobbles and schist slabs. Remnants of what might have been a 0.5m-tall stone-faced terrace lie 4.35m west and downslope from Str. 1A-21N-1st's western basal facing (U.10). This construction may have served to stabilize the ascent atop which the latter building was raised. The summit covers 8.5m² and is surfaced with cobbles. The narrowness of this stone construction (measuring 1.5m across) tentatively points to this construction having been a very long (5.67m north-south) bench bounded by U.6, 3, and 7 on the east, north, and west.

All constructions dating to TS.2 were made primarily of river cobbles set in a mud mortar. As noted, the U.8 floor on Str. 1A-21N-1st's west side was included some schist slabs in what was otherwise a surface fabricated using river-rounded stones.

Time Span 3

After Str. 1A-21N-1st was abandoned, it was largely covered by the deposition of a dark brown, moderately hard-compacted, moderately coarse-textured soil (S.1). Embedded in S.1

were stones fallen from final-phase architecture (F.1). Feature 1 overlay Str. 1A-21-N-1st and was made up of only a few scattered stones save on the west where there was a dense concentration of rocks that had tumbled down the steep western slope. The poor preservation of architecture on this side of the building suggests that gravity had not been kind to Str. 1A-21N-1st's west flank.

Structure 1A-23

Structure 1A-23, which closes off the southeast side of the Op. 33 patio, is about 2m southwest of Str. 1A-3 and 12.5m east/southeast of Str. 1A-21. The ground over which Str. 1A-23-1st was raised ascended an estimated 0.3m from northeast to southwest. Digging here was restricted to a 1m by 10.04m trench (Subop. 33D) that cut northeast-southwest across the building's approximate center (10m² cleared in all). Excavations were pursued to depths of 0.86m and 0.93m below modern ground surface within and outside architecture, respectively. One major construction phase was identified in the course of this work which was directed by C. Siders.

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	-	-	S.4	F.2	
2	-	-	S.2, 3	F.1	
3	Str. 1A-23-1 st Str. 1A-23-Sub1	U.1-7 U.8-9	-	-	
4	-	-	S.1	F.3	

Time Span 1

The earliest activity attested to in Str. 1A-23's environs is the accumulation of a light gray-brown, very fine-textured, powdery ash (S.4). Stratum 4 was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.17m (its bases was not revealed) in the southwestern end of Subop. 33D where it was observed to drop 0.07m over 1.02m southwest-to-northeast. Embedded in S.4, ca, 0.03-0.1m below its upper limit is a layer of burnt earth (F.2). Traces of white plaster were found adhering in spots to F.2. An area of intensively burnt earth measuring 0.33m in diameter was distinguishable within F.2.

Time Span 2

Blanketing S.4 is 0.2-0.3m of a light reddish-brown, moderately hard-compacted, sandy soil (S.2). Unlike its predecessor, S.2 runs more-or-less flat over the 1.24m it was exposed in the southwest portion of the trench. Another burnt earth layer (F.1) was found, this one 0.1-

0.12m below S.2's upper surface (0.18m above F.2). There were no signs of plaster embellishing F.2 though pottery fragments were pressed into its surface.

A light gray-brown, moderately fine-textured soil (S.3) was found underlying construction on Str. 1A-23's northeast side. Stratum 3 was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.17m (its base lay beyond excavation limits) and was traced for 1.34m over which distance it dropped 0.26m from southwest-to-northeast. How S.2 and 3 related to each other was not determined. It may be that Str. 1A-23-1st was built over a low northeast-to-southwest rise (represented by S.3) and that S.2, along possibly with S.4, represent deposits that accumulated in a pit or natural depression cut into S.3.

Time Span 3

Structure 1A-23-1st is a stone-faced platform that is fronted on the southwest by a terrace (U.2) that is 0.27m tall by 1.2m wide. Unit 2's fill (U.7) consists of a moderately dense concentration of rocks set in a medium-brown soil. Unit 2 gives way to a 0.21m-tall ascent (U.3) to the summit. The northeast flank was poorly preserved but seems to have been defined by a vertical facing (U.1) that rose 0.8m directly to the summit. The superstructure is paved with stones (U.4) and covers 5.07m northeast-southwest. No evidence of superstructure architecture was encountered in the narrow summit exposure. The fill exposed on the northeast side of the building consists of two superimposed levels. Unit 5, a light reddish-brown, moderately hard-compacted, sandy soil with numerous small rocks, blankets S.3 by 0.08-0.22m, thinning out upslope from northeast-to-southwest. Overlying U.5 by 0.32-0.58m are densely packed stones set in a medium-brown soil (U.6).

A surface-level building (Str. 1A-23-Sub1) delimited on the southeast and northeast by foundations that are 0.16-0.22m tall by 0.2-0.32m wide (U.8 and 9) is 0.4m northeast of U.1. Structure 1A-23-Sub1's earthen-floored interior measures at least 1.2x1.5m; its northwest and southwest foundations were not uncovered.

By the conclusion of TS.3, Str. 1A-23-1st was a 0.48-0.8m-tall, earth-and-stone-filled platform that encompassed 6.3m northeast-southwest, and was aligned roughly 310 degrees. The stone-paved summit covered 5.07m northeast-southwest. A surface-level compartment (Str. 1A-23-Sub1) was located 0.4m northeast of the platform. Structure 1A-23-Sub1 is aligned approximately 265 and encompasses at least 1.8m². Both constructions were made primarily of cobbles though a few faced blocks made up minority components of U.2, 4, and 9.

Time Span 4

After Str. 1A-23-1st and Str. 1A-23-Sub1 were abandoned most of the surviving architecture was covered by a medium-brown soil (S.1). Embedded in S.1 is a variably dense concentration of rocks (F.3) that likely fell from final-phase architecture. Feature 3 is especially dense on the poorly preserved northeast side where it was traced for 2.54m to the northeast; the limits of the tumbled debris were not found in this direction. A much lighter concentration of stones was found extending for 1.19m off Str. 1A-23-1st's southwest flank.