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PVC-013-Esqueda-Field Notes-2006

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FIELD NOTES – PVC 187 – Las Caleras

10, July 2006

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Marcela J. Esqueda

So, it's Monday morning at the site. The hike to Las Caleras is about 1km away from Don Colon's property, which is just off the side of the San Pedro Sula-Ocotopeque Highway. As we hiked up towards the site, we noticed some artifacts scattered by the first gate. Until that area is cleared, it is difficult to say if something was there or not.

Using Ed's sketch map from last year, I could easily identify structure 3, but need the workmen to clear some more before identifying the remaining structures. So the first thing they are going to do is clear off the two structures that are easier to identify and chaparral near the southeastern half of the site.

Don Manuel and Wilmer will be working on structure 3. One of the smaller structures and the farthest west of the site, this structure was also selected because it was away from the plaza and the only structure on the western half of the site not abutting the plaza. Excavation will begin on the western side of the structure using the surface-visible wall as a guide.

Don Julian and Pedro will be working on what I think is structure 6, but from the looks of its size, I'm thinking it might be structure 8. either way, if it is structure eight, it will give us an idea of what activities are going on at larger structures off of the plaza. Unlike structure 3, this structure is on the eastern half of the site and its western/southern wall faces the plaza.

For today, I'm having Mamie and Don Narcisso clear off areas near structure 6 because I need to better identify the structures and am not sure if they will be working with tomorrow. I think they will head out to Lauren's site because she would like at least 4 workers who are familiar with her area. So instead of having two people start a unit that they will not finish, I'll have them clear and prep for the new workers I'll be getting tomorrow.

Sub-operation 187A was a surface collection conducted last year during David Rogoff's (Kenyon College) survey of the valley. Thus I'll begin with sub-operation 187B, 187C, 187D.

Structure 3's western wall appears to be oriented at 211°/31°, so I'll orient a trench at 121°/301° about a meter away from the wall. The wall appears to be 7 meters long so at the 3meter mark, I'll begin the trench away from the structure.

187B/001 0-10cm Below Ground Surface (BGS)

Starting in unit 1, of structure 3. Mainly topsoil, a number of sherds found.

Height for datum on structure 3 is about 40 cm above ground surface.

Opening elevations 4 lot: NW – 43cm AGS, NE – 39cm AGS, SW- 39cm AGS, SE- 36cm AGS

Closing elevations 4 lot: NW-51cm, SW-44cm, NE-51cm, SE-50cm

Now that more clearing has been done, it is clear I have Don Julian and Pedro working on structure 8 and not structure 6. Thus, continuing with the sequence of sub-operations, structure 8 will have sub-operation 187C. It's orientation is at 220°/40° because on the surface, the orientation of the structure appears to be 130°/310°. Since the surface-visible line is about 11m long, I'll mark the unit at about 5.5m and move east about 3m to make sure I don't come on top of any architecture.

187C/001 0-10cm BGS

Unit 1, of structure 8. Mainly topsoil, a number of sherds found and some BJ

Height for datum on structure 8 is 50cm above surface. It's so high because there's a large slope on the east side of the structure; I need the datum high enough so that if the wall is very deep below ground surface, I'll be able to measure it.

Opening Elevations 4 lot: NW-146cm AGS, NE-144cm AGS, SW-133cm AGS, SE-134cm AGS

Closing Elevations 4 lot: NW-153cm, NE-153cm, SW-142cm, SE-143cm

Don Manuel and Wilmer have finished their first lot and will begin another 10cm below ground surface. The first lot was mainly topsoil and a few rocks.

Mamie and Don Narcisso are still clearing and now I've definitely sure that Don Julian and Pedro are working on structure 8 and not structure 6. I still need to find two structures so I'll keep them clearing to the southeast margins of the site.

187B/002 10-20cm BGS

Unit 1 of structure 3. Some larger rocks are coming out but lots of sherds, packed with lots of little rocks. Looks like they'll need four bags of sherds and 3 smaller bags of different non-ceramic artifacts. The sherds coming out of this lot are covered in micaceous soil. There are figurine fragments, jar rims with appliques and some pigment stones. They've also pulled some jute shells and a few tree snails. There are a variety of bowls and jar fragments. There was a small decorated incensario prong with an ugly figure; almost alien-like.

Closing Elevations: NE-92cm, SE-91cm, NW-96cm, SW-92cm

Considering they're pulling out a lot of stuff and not much tumble is coming out, I think I'm going to have them go down 10 more centimeters below ground surface.

187C/002 10-20cm BGS

Don Julian and Pedro have only pulled sherds and the occasional large rock, nothing tumble-like really appears in the unit or lot. Recovering a decent number of sherds, much smaller in quantity compared to sub-op 187B.

Closing Elevations: NE-162cm, SE-149cm, NW-162cm, SW-157cm.

I am not sure which corner they are using to measure how much they have removed from below ground surface, but this lot appears to be closer to 20cm deep than 10cm. So their next lot will begin at 30cm below ground surface.

187C/003 30-40cm BGS

So, as they are excavating I notice that in the western half of the unit, a line of rocks appears.

Although I don't think they are any higher than 1 course and they are slightly tilted, I am going

to keep them there and work in front of that feature. For now, I'll temporarily call that line "OSO." I do not think that's the original wall of structure 8, but it is something. In this lot, I am finding lots of tumble consisting of large limestone rocks. Aside from OSO, nothing looks very flat. Will excavate 10cm further and be cautious in removing rocks.
Closing Elevations: NW-170cm, SW-155cm, NE-178cm, SE-179cm

11, July 2006

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Marcela J. Esqueda

So I didn't end up with Manuelito or Don Narcisso, instead I got Chico and Adan. Since Don Narcisso and Manuelito finished clearing structure 6 yesterday, Chico and Adan can start excavating today. On the surface, structure 6 appears to be oriented at 162°/342°, so my first unit will be oriented at 252°/72°. The Datum for structure 6 is 20cm above ground surface. Considering it abuts the slope and is very close to another structure facing the plaza, the datum for this structure does not have to be very high. And continuing with the sequence, excavations at this structure will fall under sub-operation 187D.

187D/001 0-10cm BGS

Opening Elevations: NW-70cm, SW-66cm, NE-76cm, SE-57cm

Closing Elevations: NW-83cm, SW-73cm, NE-75cm, SE-70cm

This lot is mainly topsoil, with a few sherds, obsidian, and bajareque. At the end of this lot, I realized we set up the test pit off of a feature on the summit of the structure versus the visible-surface wall. So, if I come across some architecture, I might be a few degrees off. Hopefully I'll still pick it up without losing too much material.

187B/003 20-30cm BGS

Closing Elevations: SW-107cm, NW-113cm, NE-95cm, SE-81cm

When I compared the difference in closing elevations for this lot and the previous lot, I realized that the western half of the unit had about 5 to 10cm removed and the eastern about 10-15cm removed. Part of the problem is that there are lots of large rocks coming out, looks like we might be in some tumble and I am hesitant to remove rocks, especially because we are so close to the surface-visible line. Also, when removing large rocks you create gaps in the unit that the workers then clear the dirt from around level the unit. Considering 2/3 of the excavation unit are full of large rocks, possibly tumble, Ed agreed that I should open ½ a meter west of the unit to give me more to look at before removing rocks. Lots of sherds are coming out, two large bags full to be exact. Also pulling out some chert, obsidian, and jute.

187B/004 0-20cm BGS

Opening Elevations: SE-59cm, SW-57cm, NW-65cm, NE-66cm

Closing Elevations: SE-70cm, SW-75cm, NW-80cm, NE-74cm

In unit 2 of structure 3, this lot is primarily topsoil and since the profile of the western wall of unit 1 revealed no tumble or rock for the first 20cm, this lot is 20cm deep. Or at least I intended the workers to excavate that much. Hoping less tumble will appear in this unit so that I can proceed towards the structure and not away from the structure. As they pull out sherds, I

recognize some of them as potstands. So this means I have to re-think about my hypothesis in regards to individuals at Las Caleras participating in craft production. I hope it's a fluke because if they are making pottery as well, where would they fire it and where would they get the resources. It seems a bit cost-effective to hike 2/3 of a kilometer down hill to get clay and then hike it uphill to a site. Who knows, we'll just have to wait and see. Aside from that, no tumble, one or two rocks but lots of sherds. The ones closer to the 20cm bgs mark appear to be covered in some white film, perhaps its ash or limestone.

187C/004 40-50cm BGS

Closing Elevations: NW-178cm, NE-172cm, SE-170cm, SW-184cm

Since I'm not really moving any rocks out behind "OSO" or "OSO" for that matter, I have having them clear the packed dirt from the tumble before removing any rocks. Since most of them appear to be angled or fallen, I have them removed and continue towards are cm mark. Some tumble was taken out and larger rocks that were underneath "OSO" but in the adjacent unit were left in-situ.

187B/005 20-30cm BGS

Closing Elevations: SE-112cm, SW-116cm, NW-112cm, NE-112cm

Although the previous lot was 20cm deep, this lot is only 10cm deep because I'm trying to level it with lot 187B/003 in unit 1. This way, I can then combine that meter unit with this 1/2 meter unit and make it easier for the workmen to excavate. They've been removing small rocks and it appears that the concentration of tumble is in unit 1, just east of unit 2.

187D/002 10-20cm BGS

Since unit 1 is slightly off the surface-visible wall, I am having them go much slower than the other excavators because don't want to take out any rocks until more definite of what I'm looking at. So they've been just cleaning around and between rocks. For a 10cm lot, they are pulling out a good number of sherds. Since I'm running out of bags, I think they are going to have to put everything in much smaller bags. So this lot actually has 12 bags. Looks like there's a line that runs parallel to the northern wall of the unit and another one slightly diagonal in the unit. Need to move over a 1/2 meter to make sure. Huge rock, not sure if the back or front of a wall. Will open 1/2 meter unit to the west of unit 1 to explore this idea.

187C/005 50-60cm BGS

Closing Elevations: NW-190cm, SW-182cm, SE-180cm, NE-190cm

Lots of sherds, no rocks. Pedro and DJ are working on cleaning the unit and clearing deeper into the unit. Lots of dirt, few to none rocks. Some obsidian and chert.

187C/006 60-70cm BGS

Closing Elevations: NW-202cm, NE-202cm, SW-193cm, SE-189cm

Excavation in unit 1 of structure 8 will continue until sterile soil is reached. Fewer sherds are being pulled and a fewer number of rocks are appearing in unit as well. Soil is a different consistency and all seems to be going smoothly.

187C/007 70-80cm BGS

Closing Elevations: NW-211cm, SW-204cm, NE-211cm, SE-205cm

So although I brought out two full packages of bags, I have run out of bags. I only have medium-sized or very small bags, thus lot 187D/002 is made up of 12 medium sized bags! Anyhow, in this particular lot of unit 1 in structure 8, no rocks, just soil and a few sherds. Soil is slightly discolored but nothing discolored like white bedrock. Unlike structure 3, this structure lacks the layer of soil that is compacted with artifacts and small cobbles. Will continue excavations tomorrow

12 July, 2006

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Marcela J. Esqueda

187B/006 35-50cm BGS

Closing Elevations: NE-134cm, SW-85cm, NW-92cm, SE-126cm

Although I started this lot yesterday, the work men were unable to finish the lot until today. From now on, all lots from unit 1 and unit 2 are horizontally combined, in that when I say they are excavating 35-50cm below ground surface, its in both the 1 meter unit-1 and ½ meter unit-2. Looking at the sherds coming out of this level and looking at the profile, this lot is compacted with many sherds and little rocks, many of them covered in ash or a white substance. They leveled out the unit to about 50cm BGS. Taking out tumble and clearing in front of a possible wall. Tons of sherds for a small lot, but as Don Manuel noted, might have hit a refuse midden. The problem I'm having is that the rocks are all jumbled up but occasionally there will be a rock or two that lines up. I know that the workmen are frustrated at the rate I'm going but I'd rather be safe than sorry. Plus, if they do rip it out later, I hope to catch it in the profile. After leveling this unit, I hope to open another unit. Note that more is being removed from the eastern portion of the unit and that's due to the fact that it's easier to identify the tumble closer to the structure. Plus Don Manuel is a bit anxious to find the wall and feels its directly behind this tumble.

187C/008 0-10cm AGS

Opening Elevations: NE-136cm, SE-112cm, NW-132cm, SW-110cm

Closing Elevations: NE-141cm, SE-123cm, SW-123cm, NW-143cm

Although I didn't reach sterile soil in unit 1, I felt that if I had continued excavating until I got zero sherds, I might not be able to get to the structure wall and find its base. Thus, taking into account that very few sherds were found in the previous lot, I decided to move westwards and open a 1x1 meter unit adjacent to unit 1. If I have time, I will return to unit 1 to excavate to sterile soil to see what bedrock in this area looks like. So in unit 2 of structure 8, this lot consists of topsoil and the pulling of some tumble visible in the first few centimeters below ground surface.

187D/003 0-10cm BGS

Opening Elevations: NW-70cm, SW-64cm, NE-75cm, SE-70cm

Closing Elevations: NW-70, SW-56, NE-68, SE-47

Hoping to better understand the huge rock and two possible lines in structure 6, I opened ½ a meter west of unit 1. This lot consists of clearing the topsoil and tumble in unit 2 of structure 6. Goal is to identify if came across the front of a wall or the back of a wall. Need to measure new datum height because the cows disturbed our original point. So new datum height is 20cm AGS,

which is actually the same as before. Some huge rocks are appearing in the unit, looks like they have been pushed off of the wall found in unit 1. Because level is to rocks from 10cm bgs, there is only about 3cm difference between the rocks and going deeper. Goal is to just expose rocks at the moment. More rocks were found, possible line. Not sure so going to open another ½ unit to the west to better understand what I'm looking out.

187C/009

Closing Elevations: NW-150cm, SW-144cm, NE-157cm, SE-157cm

Clearing out tumble, but will first clean out dirt and then pull out rocks. In the unit, there looks like there is a series of fallen lines, rocks are slanted, almost pushed out but in a line. Perhaps a retaining wall of some sorts was put to support the original wall of the structure. Because there are lots of tumbled rocks, am going slowly and am going to open a unit to the south/west of this one. Unit 3 is being opened in hopes of finding a better defined wall that will make it easier for me to identify which rocks to pull out in front of it.

187D/004 0-10cm BGS

Opening Elevations: NW-50cm, NE-58cm, SW-45cm, SE-36cm

Closing Elevations: NW-60cm, SW-56cm, NE-70cm, SE-50cm

As I mentioned before am opening a ½ meter unit to the west of unit 2. Unit 3 is being opened to clarify the situation found in unit 1 and 2. Primarily topsoil being removed and dirt between rocks. More rocks than sherds are being found.

187B/007 0-20cm BGS

Opening Elevations: SE-91cm, SW-96cm, NE-93cm, NW-93cm

Closing Elevations:

Opening a meter unit to the east of unit 1, hoping to find a better line of a wall. I won't go into sterile soil in unit 1 or 2 because I am running out of time in the field and need to find a wall for this structure. If time permits, will go to sterile soil below wall once it is found. In the Eastern Edge of unit 3, there appears to be a wall. Must clear more tumble to be definite. This lot will be continued tomorrow

187D/005 10-20cm BGS

Closing Elevations: NW-74cm, SW-60cm, NE-84cm, SE-60cm

Continuing 10cm more below ground surface, trying to level off unit 3 with units 1 and 2. Have asked the workmen to brush more than remove soil because don't want to be removing fill like I did in unit 1. I still can't tell exactly what's going on, so I'll open another unit to the west of unit 3.

187D/006 20-50cm BGS

Closing Elevations: NW-120cm, SW-120cm, NE-119cm, SE-110cm

As rocks were being removed from the unit, it was becoming clear that they were passing the 20cm mark for the lot. Part of this is that there was tumble and in the western edge of the unit looks like a possible wall. I'm almost positive it's the front of the wall that we have in this unit (3) and the back in unit 1. So that's why the lot is so big, but it's mostly tumble anyhow.

187D/007 0-20cm BGS

Opening Elevations: NW-50cm, SW-45cm, NE-50cm, SE-50cm

Closing Elevations: NW-70cm, SW-65cm, NE-70cm, SE-70cm

Unit 4 of structure 6 is being bagged in this lot. Clearing off topsoil and getting to where we know the wall begins. I'm also opening up this unit to the west of unit 3 because I want to give the workmen more space and make sure the wall is clearly visible. Since we know heavy tumble beings around 20cm BGS, having the work men dig through the topsoil at 20cm instead of 10cm. When hit tumble, will change lots.

187C/010 0-10cm BGS

Opening Elevations: NW-109cm, NE-110cm, SW-75cm, SE-82cm

Closing Elevations: NW-, 160, NE-167cm, SW-164cm, SE-164cm

Unit 3 of structure 8 is being opened to help find the northern wall of structure 8. This lot consists of topsoil and removing tumble. Ed came to the site and agreed that I keep "OSO" that appears in unit one and that the northern wall of structure 8 is underneath the tumble in unit 3. Will probably finish this lot tomorrow morning.

13 July, 2006

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Marcela J. Esqueda

187C/010 Lot ended up becoming 30-50 cm deep, mainly tumble

Finishing up lot that Don Julian and Pedro started. Taking out tumble in unit 3, looks like there were rocks put up against the northern wall of structure 8 to either preserve it or keep it from falling. That's why it was so difficult to remove rocks that appeared to be falling but in lines, they were purposely put to support the northern wall. In the south/western edge of unit, found the wall LEON, will be pulling out tumble in front of it.

187D/008 20-30cm BGS

Closing Elevations: NW-80cm, SW-84cm, NE-80cm, SE-72cm

Chico and Adan are removing tumble in front of wall, which is named MOTAGUA. Taking out the tumble slowly, recovering some artifacts but not as many found in sup-operation 187B. Unlike the other two structures, structure 6 is closer to the surface and abuts the slope of the hills, so for some reason it's a cow's favorite spot to chill. The reason I mention this is because they moved my datum again and this time the height of the deight is 30cm above ground surface. So from now on, measurements are different than those from previous lots.

187D/009 30-50cm BGS

Closing Elevations: NW-100cm, NE-100cm, SW-110cm, SE-110cm

Since unit 3 and Unit 4 are both ½ meter units of structure 6, I decided to combine them to get a 1x1 meter unit. This will allow the workers more room to work and keep the lots associated with each other together. Makes it much easier to go down 20cm in a 1x1 at once than working on each ½ meter independently. We are mainly clearing tumble in front of MOTAGUA. I want to see direction of wall because it is more than a few degrees off to be perfectly perpendicular to the unit. Fewer sherds are found and fewer large rocks.

187B/007 Closing at 50cm BGS

Closing Elevations: NW-107cm, SW-108cm, NE-117cm, SE-118cm

So this lot is pretty big because Don Manuel was on a hunt for the wall in all of this tumble. And of course, he was right. We found the wall MICHOACAN and its orientation is close to perpendicular to the 3 units. Huge rocks were being pulled out in front of the wall, with lots of ceramic fragments. Some of them pretty big. Bone has been found and lot will be closed at 50cm below ground surface. Will take measurements and then continue further down below wall, looking for its base and sterile soil. Soil still consists of that compact layer of sherd and small cobbles.

187B/008 50-80cm BGS

Continuing to excavate in front of wall MICHOACAN, clearing rocks. Soil is changing to a much lighter color and easier to excavate.

187D/010

Closing Elevations: NW-140cm, NE-140cm, SW-165cm, SE-165cm

This lot was used to clean fallen rocks in front of MOTAGUA in structure 6. The front part of wall looks pushed out, similar to the various lines found in Structure 8. Will take out the tumble, hoping to see a better view of MOTAGUA.

187B/008 80-100cm BGS

Closing Elevations: NW-134cm, NE-140cm, SE-141cm, SW-134cm

Decided to change lots because layer of sherds beneath MICHOACAN is definitely gone and the soil is definitely a lot easier to dig thru. Although it appears that the wall does not continue deeper, I am searching for bedrock. Various decorated sherds are coming out and so are a few foot bones. Hopefully there is no burial, the workmen swear that there will be one if we keep excavating this unit deeper.

187B/009 100-120cm BGS

Closing Elevations: NE-162cm, NW-160cm, SW-161cm, SE-160cm

Continuing to excavate below MICHOACAN until we don't find sherds. The workmen continue to find sherds in large quantities and a few more bones are recovered. They keep saying a burial is close by.

14 July 2006

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Marcela J. Esqueda

So today is what I hope is my last day of excavation. I would like to come on Sunday and draw my sections and take EDM points of my units. Most of the lots we are working on today are geared towards finding sterile soil in units with walls. Since all three structures have architecture, it will be easier for me to date them. So here's hoping to getting all of my work done today.

187D/011

Closing Elevations: NW-130cm, NE-130cm, SW-140cm, SE-140cm

Chico and Adan have definitely found a better preserved portion of the wall Motagua, perhaps even the base of the wall. It appears approximately 84cm below ground surface. Some sherds and groundstone and chert have been found. Will continue to remove tumble, but more freely now because we have clearly identified the wall.

187C/011

Closing Elevations: NW-174cm, SW-174cm, NE-174cm, SE-172cm

Excavating about 100cm below ground surface, am clearing about 10cm down in front of LEON, looking for base of wall and sterile soil in unit 3. Sherds have been found amongst the tumbled rock.

187C/012

Closing Elevations: NW-200cm, SW-190cm, NE-193cm, SE-193cm

Twenty centimeter lot that is just in front of LEON, still searching for base.

187B/010

Closing Elevations: NW-182cm, SW-181cm, SE-181cm, NE-177cm

Approximately 120cm below ground surface in front/below MICHOACAN. Find more bone and soil is still pretty easy to dig through, nothing like the soil in units 1 and 2. artifacts are still coming out in large quantities

187D/012

Closing Elevations: NW-140cm, NE-140cm, SE-150cm, SW-150cm

10 cm below MOTAGUA, clearing the entire meter unit to the west of the wall to show it's depth and find bedrock.

187B/011

Approximately 130cm below ground surface in unit 3 and about 40cm west of eastern edge of unit 3 is a burial. Going down 10cm more because not found bedrock. Wall does not continue after 71cm BGS. About 61cm below wall is where the burial begins. Because of time and lack of good preservation outside of the field, the burial will be left in-situ for next year. I will take the measurements and draw sketches of the visible femur and its location in relation to the wall and unit. I will then cover it with plastic and 20cm of dirt so that when it is backfilled, I will have a layer of nylon above it and covering the wall. So when I return for more in depth excavations, I will know that after the nylon, about 20cm below that is the burial and to proceed with caution. Just to the west of the burial, I had the workmen dig about 10cm till they came across limestone bedrock. Since I've accomplished what I needed, this will end excavation for this season and structure 3.

187D/013

Closing Elevations: NW-157cm, NE-156cm, SW-147cm, SE-150cm

Approximately 80-90cm below ground surface. Was searching for bedrock and found it. Unlike the other units of operation, here the bedrock is definitely defined. The limestone below the soil makes the soil right about it a much lighter tan color. Very few sherds were found, but

MOTAGUA is clear exposed and PLATENSE is better seen. Excavations for this structure are now finished as well for this season.

187C/013

Closing Elevations: NW-200cm, SE-200cm, SW-227cm, NE-200cm

Considering I didn't find a burial in structure 6, I was hoping to avoid one in structure 8. But nope, apparently the supporting wall that we found in Structure 8, that was similar to that in structure 3, also lead to the discovery of a burial below the wall. Approximately 100-120cm BGS and 32cm below LEON is a burial. Because of time constraints, the procedures followed in 187B/011 were followed for this burial. It will be excavated next year. Unlike structure 3, it appears that that the bedrock for this unit is slightly deeper than 10cm below the burial. Ran out of time, but will pursue in the future.