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PSB OP 033 Excavation Report

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Site 33

Site 33 consists of two patio-focused structure aggregates situated atop the high terrace in the Las Huertas/Hondo pocket. The buildings cling to the edge of a steep descent into a seasonal stream channel lying immediately to the north. The largest group, containing the most sizable buildings, consists of Strs. 33-1/8 arranged irregularly around a patio on the far western site margin. Structures 33-9/11 define a patio approximately 61m to the northeast. Both patios are open to the south and occupy low eminences above the surrounding terrain. Site 32 is 100m north-northwest of and across the aforementioned quebrada from Site 33; Site 34 lies roughly 41m to the east. The closest perennial water source is the Rio Hondo, ca. 325m to the south, while the Rio Las Huertas is found 425m to the north. Structures 33-1, 6, 9, and 11 were dug from June 18-20, 1984, 20 person-days of labor being invested in clearing approximately 22m² of prehistoric deposits. Investigations were overseen by Patricia Urban, Edward Schortman, Julia Miller, and Jeffrey Hendricks.

Structure 33-1

Structure 33-1 is 5m east-southeast of Str. 33-2, 6.5m northeast of Str. 33-8, and 47m east and across the patio from Str. 33-6. The building was investigated by means of three trenches laid against its east, south, and west flanks (Subops. 33D, 33E, and 33G respectively). A desire to increase the artifact sample associated with Str. 33-1 was one spur to enlarge excavations as was an interest in reconstructing the building's final form and dimensions. Digging was carried down maximum depths of 0.68m south, 0.3m west, and 0.4m east of construction; no probes were made into architectural fill. A total of 9.3m² was uncovered in the course of this work, revealing a single construction phase.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Date</u>
33D/1	6 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	?
33D/2	-	Terminal Debris (Secondary) and Preconstruction	?
33D/3	-	Preconstruction	?
33D/4	empty	Preconstruction	-
33D/5	sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	?
33D/6	8 sherds 1 <u>jute</u> shell	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	?
33E/1	3 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	?

33E/2	empty	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	-
33E/3	empty	Preconstruction	-
33E/4	1 sherd	Preconstruction Occupation Debris (Secondary)	?
33E/5	empty	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	-
33E/6	2 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	?
33E/7	-	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	?
33G/1	8 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	?
33G/2	13 sherds 1 obsidian piece	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	?

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	Str. 33-1-1st	U.1-6	-	-	?
3	-	-	S.2	F.1,2	-

Time Span 1

Natural deposition of S.1, a fine-textured, red-brown clay containing a few small stones and pebbles, occurred during this interval. Stone density increases with depth within the level. Stratum 1 rises 0.27m over 1.72m south to north, paralleling the slope of modern ground surface in the area, but runs fairly even east-west over the 1.96m exposed in Subop. 33D. This red clay level appears to ascend at least 0.26m over 1.5m west to east but the exact dimensions of the slope were not revealed in Subop. 33G. Stratum 1 was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.55m south of Str. 33-1-1st, though nowhere was its base encountered. The greater density of pebbles with depth hints at the proximity of parent material; bedrocks was not encountered, however. Recovery of a single sherd from S.1 may hint at human occupation in the area prior to raising Str. 33-1-1st. Percolation of this artifact downward from later levels can not, however, be ruled out.

Time Span 2

Structure 33-1-1st's cobble facings were exposed in three discontinuous segments and it is not possible at present to be sure how the various uncovered elements were related. Based on a combination of observations derived from excavations and examination of the surface, U.1 likely joins U.6 to form the building's basal walls on the south and west respectively. The former stands 0.28m high and is built of cobbles ranging from 0.06x0.07m to 0.17x0.24m in size. Unit 6 ascends roughly 0.2m. No wall comparable to U.1 was recorded on the east in Subop. 33D, leaving open the question of how the southern terrace articulates with the main body of the edifice in this direction. Unit 3 is the next ascending riser on the north, standing 0.23m above the 0.48m-wide terrace defined by U.1 on the south (it is not clear how U.3 is integrated into the rest of the edifice). Unit 3, in turn, delimits the south edge of a terrace that is ca. 1.4m wide and terminates in the ca. 0.16m-high, poorly preserved remnants of U.4. The latter apparently defines the southern edge of Str. 33-1-1st's summit and seems to join with the eastern basal facing, U.5, at a corner just beyond Subop. 33E's eastern limits. Unit 5 is the only architecture identified on the building's east flank, apparently forming a basal facing rising a preserved 0.12m above S.1 directly to the platform's summit. Unit 5 is set 0.11m into S.1. A 0.19m-high facing (U.2) is part of a 1.2m wide terrace fronting Str. 33-1-1st on the west. Unit 2 is set above S.1 and is backed on the east by an upward sloping segment of this soil level. No construction clearly linked to U.2 was identified.

Structure 33-1-1st, therefore, is a stone-faced platform rising 0.67m, 0.39m, and ca. 0.12m on the south, west, and east respectively. These height discrepancies probably result from erecting the edifice over terrain ascending from south to north and west to east (see S.1 in TS 1); the eastern basal wall, built on level terrain, in the lowest while the southern and western terraces must rise higher to compensate for the slopes on which they were raised. The more significant the natural ascent the more terraces were introduced to raise the structure; two on the south, one on the west, and none on the east (not counting step-ups to the summit). Overall, the building measures roughly 7m east-west and is aligned approximately 76 degrees.

Time Span 3

Stratum 2, a brown, fine-textured clay containing numerous roots, buries S.1 and most Str. 33-1-1st construction. Tumbled architectural debris embedded in this soil level extends 1.44m east of U.5 and 0.74m west of U.6 (F.1 and 2 respectively). Feature 1 is particularly dense, implying that its likely source, U. 5, originally stood taller above S.1 than its preserved 0.12m would suggest. Stones are not as common in F.2, indicating that U.6 probably did not rise much higher in the past than it does now.

Structure 33-6

Structure 33-6 defines the western margin of the patio group composed of Strs. 33-1/8, lying 47m west of Str. 33-1, 3m west of Str. 33-7, and 7m southwest of Str. 33-5. This building was investigated via Subop. 33H, a 1.05x1.9m trench dug into the building's west side. Digging reached a maximum depth of 0.81m below ground surface east of construction, revealing a single construction phase.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Date</u>
33H/1	16 sherds 1 obsidian piece 2 <u>Pachychilus</u> shells	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	EPC
33H/2	74 sherds 1 andesite piece 5 <u>Pachychilus</u> shells	Terminal Debris (Secondary) and Preconstruction Occupation Debris (Secondary)	EPC, LC
33H/3	3 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	?
33H/4	138 sherds 10 <u>Pachychilus</u> shells	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	?
33H/5	110 sherds 11 <u>Pachychilus</u> shells	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	?
33H/6	122 sherds 5 <u>Pachychilus</u> shells (Secondary)	Preconstruction Occupation Debris	?
33H/7	84 sherds 1 andesite piece 5 <u>Pachychilus</u> shells	Preconstruction Occupation Debris (Secondary)	?
33H/8	sherds, <u>Pachychilus</u> shells	Preconstruction Occupation Debris (Secondary)	?
33H/9	sherds	Preconstruction Occupation Debris (Secondary)	?

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	-	LC?
2	-	-	-	F.1	LC?
3	Str. 33-6-1st	U.1	-	-	EPC
4	-	-	S.2	F.2	-

Time Span 1

Stratum 1 is a light orange to tan, fine-textured, hard-compacted clay with white to pink inclusions. This level was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.61m; its base lay beyond excavation limits. Stratum 1 appears to run fairly level east-west, though it was exposed over only 0.94m in this direction. Recovery of artifacts from S.1 indicates occupation in the vicinity of Str. 33-6-1st prior to that building's erection.

Time Span 2

Feature 1 appears to be a pit excavated into S.1 after deposition of the latter was complete, and prior to construction of U.1. The western pit wall descends 0.3m over a horizontal distance of 0.17m while the northern flank slopes down more gradually, dropping 0.28m over 0.6m north-to-south. Feature 1's base is relatively flat for the 0.51m west-to-east extent of it that was revealed in excavation. The pit is filled with a dark brown, fine-textured soil containing numerous small and medium-size stones (the latter averaging 0.06x0.12m) as well as artifacts and some preserved organics (especially Pachyichilus snail shells [called jutes locally]). Whatever its original function, F.1 seems to have served as a trash repository prior to being buried by U.1.

Time Span 3

Unit 1 is an east-west running cobble wall rising ca. 0.31m above F.1 and measuring 0.46m across. The basal stones of U.1 protrude up to 0.12m into F.1. This construction was exposed for 1.3m and may be an addition appended to the main body of the building lying approximately 0.4m east of Subop. 33H. Unfortunately, time did not permit investigating the relationship between U.1 and other architectural elements. Unit 1 is oriented 85 degrees.

Time Span 4

Stratum 2, a fine-textured, root-rich, dark brown-to-black soil covers U.1, S.1, and F.1. Feature 2 is a moderately dense scattering of cobbles extending 0.93m west of Subop. 33H's eastern limits. These stones apparently tumbled from construction lying east beyond excavation.

Structure 33-9

Structure 33-9 occupies the west side of a patio defined on the north and east by Strs. 33-10, 4.5m distant, and Str. 33-11, 7.5m distant, respectively. Excavation of 7.3m² uncovered most of the building's southeast face (Subop. 33C) and north corner (Subop. 33F). Digging was pursued to a maximum depth of 0.4m below modern ground surface outside construction; no probes were sunk into construction fill and the summit was not exposed. A single construction phase, with at least one period of renovation, was identified in the course of this work.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Date</u>
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33C/1	empty	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	-
33C/2	18 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	EPC
33C/3	3 sherds	Preconstruction Occupation Debris (Secondary)	EPC
33C/4	6 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	EPC
33C/5	19 sherds 1 mano fragment	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	EPC
33C/6	1 sherd	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	EPC
33F/1	33 sherds 2 obsidian pieces 1 mano fragment	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	EPC

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	Str. 33-9-1st	U.1-5	-	-	EPC
3	-	-	S.2, 3	F.1	-

Time Span 1

Stratum 1 is a red-brown sandy clay containing numerous small, yellow-tan colored, easily abraded rocks. This earth level ascends 0.16m over 1.84m southeast to northwest and directly underlies U.1, 4, and 5. Stratum 1 was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.23m, but its base was not encountered. Recovery of three sherds from this level (lot 33C/3) may indicate occupation in the area prior to the construction of Str. 33-9-1st. Just as likely, however, these few artifacts may have percolated downwards from later levels associated with the use of the latter building.

Time Span 2

Structure 33-9-1st is a stone-faced platform that was originally fronted on the southeast by U.1. The latter is a 0.23- to 0.34m-high cobble facing oriented 57 degrees, 30 minutes and set atop S.1. Unit 1's base is uneven, rising 0.07 to 0.11m from southwest to northeast, apparently following a natural ascent in this direction. Stones comprising the southeast facing are cobbles 0.21x0.25m to 0.2x0.34m in size, laid in a single, horizontal course. The unit extends 2.45m

southwest-northeast between its south and east corners; only 0.5m of U.1's southwest and 0.2m of its northeast walls were exposed.

Subsequently, the building was enlarged on the northeast and southwest by the addition of U.3 and U.2 respectively. The former runs 0.6m northeast from U.1's east corner before cornering and extending for at least 0.25m to the northwest. Unit 3 is built of relatively small cobbles, 0.06x0.14m to 0.12x0.22m, set in a single horizontal course. Unit 2 adds 1.4m to Str. 33-9-1st's southwest flank; U.2's southwest wall was followed for only 0.55m to the northwest. The cobbles comprising U.2 are also diminutive, measuring 0.09x0.14m to 0.11x0.0.15m. As with U.1 and 3, the U.2 stones are set in a single horizontal course. The U.2 and 3 facings are shorter than U.1 (each is roughly 0.15m high). Units 2 and 3 are aligned 70 degrees, 30 minutes and 66 degrees respectively.

Unit 5 appears to be a continuation of U.3, marking that addition's north corner. The facing stands ca. 0.15m high, is fashioned of small cobbles averaging 0.15m in diameter, and is oriented 326 degrees. Lying 0.65m northeast of U.5 is a low wall built of relatively large (0.1m to 0.27m diameter) angular, light-colored stones (U.6). The area intervening between U.5 and 6 is paved with irregularly shaped pieces of stone. Unit 6 may be part of a pavement formalizing the northeast, patio-facing, flank of Str. 33-9-1st. No sign of this construction was identified further south near the building's east corner in the vicinity of U.3.

After construction of U.2-6, Str. 33-9-1st measured approximately 3.7m northwest-southeast by 4.45m northeast-southwest, rose 0.15-0.34m high, and was aligned 56 degrees to 70 degrees, 30 minutes. A stone pavement apparently projected 0.65m northeast from the edifice towards the patio, though how far along Str. 33-9-1st's northeast face this construction extended was not determined.

Time Span 3

Stratum 2, a red-brown, fine-textured clay, buries the lower portions of Str. 33-9-1st and is itself overlain by S.3, the latter distinguished from S.2 by its dense concentration of small roots. Together, these soils bury most of the exposed architecture and are 0.13-0.24m thick. Feature 1, a moderately dense concentration of cobbles extending 1.44m southeast of U.1, is embedded in S.2 and 3 and consists of architectural debris dislodged from final-phase construction.

Structure 33-11

Structure 33-11 is on the east side of the patio defined by Strs. 33-9/11, ca.7.5m east of Str. 33-9 and 2m southeast of Str. 33-10. Roughly 3.1m² were cleared here as part of Subop. 33B, exposing about half of the building's east face, including its northeast corner. Excavation was carried down to a maximum depth of 0.36m below modern ground surface outside architecture revealing a single construction phase. Digging was not pursued in architectural fill.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Date</u>
33B/1	8 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	EPC

33B/2	32 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	EPC?
33B/3	2 sherds	Preconstruction Occupation Debris (Secondary)	EPC
33B/4	17 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	EPC
33B/5	5 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary) and Preconstruction Occupation Debris (Secondary)	EPC
33B/6	3 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	EPC

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	Str. 33-11-1st	U.1	-	-	EPC
3	-	-	S.2	F.1	-

Time Span 1

Stratum 1 is a red-brown, hard-compacted clay containing large numbers of small, yellow to tan colored rocks that abrade easily. This earth level rises 0.14m over 1.42m east to west and is exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.16m; its base was not located during excavation. Recovery of a few artifacts from S.1 may point to occupation here prior to Str. 33-11-1st's erection. Equally probable, however, is the interpretation that these sherds worked their way down below the permeable S.1/2 interface from later deposits associated with the building's use.

Time Span 2

Unit 1 is Str. 33-11-1st's eastern and northern basal facings. These walls consist of medium-size cobbles set ca. 0.02 m into S.1 and rising 0.17m above that earth level. The U.1 stones are set in a single horizontal course. The eastern wall is aligned 14 degrees (2.2m of U.1's eastern facing was uncovered while only 0.9m of the northern basal wall was exposed).

Time Span 3

Stratum 2, a dark brown, root-rich clay, overlies U.1. Feature 1 is a moderately dense concentration of stones dislodged from Str. 33-11-1st, extending 0.89m east of U.1's eastern facing, and embedded in S.2.

Chronological Summary

The earliest occupation attested to at Site 33 pertains to the Late Classic. Deposits predating U.1 of Str. 33-6-1st yielded quantities of artifacts, along with some organic debris, that date to this interval (based on field assessments of ceramics recovered from the relevant levels). The pit designated F.1 seems to date to this interval as does its contents. The principal construction period for Str. 33-1-1st may also fall in this span, based primarily on the nature of the architecture revealed in excavations.

The primary period of occupation identified in excavations, however, is the Early Postclassic. Most likely, the patio cluster composed of Strs. 33-9/11 was built and used throughout this interval. Significant Early Postclassic settlement on and around Str. 33-6-1st is also indicated; whether this was also the case for Str. 33-1-1st remains unknown. Str. 33-6-1st, U.1 was probably raised now. Since this wall may well have been an addition to the main body of Str. 33-6-1st, however, it is not possible to say with any certainty whether the latter was also erected during the Early Postclassic. At present, we are inclined to see occupation at Site 33 as having been initially concentrated in the western portion of the settlement, probably associated with stone-faced platforms (possibly Strs. 33-1-1st and 33-6-1st). This area continued to be used during the Early Postclassic, some buildings being modified during the period, while a new patio group was established a short distance to the east. Site 33 was apparently abandoned prior to the Late Postclassic and was not reoccupied in the centuries following the Spanish Conquest.

Architectural Summary

Early Postclassic architecture at Site 33 is invariably simple. The clearest examples, Strs. 33-9-1st and 33-11-1st, are platforms no more than 0.34m high, faced with a single line of unfaced river cobbles set in a brown mud mortar. Orientations are very variable, ranging from 14 degrees to 85 degrees, structure placement apparently being determined more by the builders' desires to set their constructions atop low natural rises than by adherence to principles of orthogonality. Stone sizes also differ significantly, ranging from 0.1x0.1m to 0.2x0.34m, with most clustered towards the middle and small end of the continuum. Angular chunks are clearly represented only in Str. 33-9-1st's U.6, a pavement appended onto the building's northeast (patio-facing) side. This is also the only stone surface recorded at the site. Structure 33-9-1st was the only building sufficiently cleared to permit reconstruction of basal dimensions, beginning as a platform 2.9m wide northeast-southwest, it grew to encompass 3.7x4.45m, exclusive of the U.6 floor. Overall, Early Postclassic architecture at Site 33 appears casual, with relatively little attention devoted to raising walls more than one stone tall or leveling ground surface prior to construction (note the rise of Str. 33-9-1st's U.1 from southwest to northeast).