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PSB OP 068 Excavation Report

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Site 68

The four low platforms comprising Site 68 occupy the inter-cardinal points of a patio open on all sides save the south where the steep ascent to the Cerro Pena Blanca foothills is located. Situated in the northeast corner of the Las Huertas/Hondo pocket, Site 68 is roughly 225m and 150m southeast of Sites 67 and 69 respectively, while the perennial Rio Las Huertas lies 200m to the north. Structures 68-1 and 3 were excavated from June 5-7, 1985 under the direction of Colleen Siders, Marie Hamilton, and Marie Selvaggio. Twelve person-days of labor were invested in uncovering 11.5m² of deposits here.

Structure 68-1

Structure 68-1 is built into the steep southern slope on the southeast patio corner, ca. 16.5m southwest of Str. 68-3 and 16m west-southwest of Str. 68-4. The building was investigated via a 1x5.3m excavation (Subop. 68B) dug into the building's north flank and carried down to maximum depths of 0.61m and 0.45m below ground surface beyond and within and beneath construction respectively. A single building phase was recognized in the course of this work.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Date</u>
68B/1 -		Terminal Debris (Secondary)	?
68B/2	-	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	?
68B/3	-	Terminal Debris (Secondary), Fill, and Preconstruction	LC

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. 68-1-1st	U.1-3	-	-	LC?
3	-	-	S.2	F.1,2	-

Time Span 1

Stratum 1, a light brown, medium-textured soil containing a few small rocks, was deposited prior to the construction of Str. 68-1-1st. This level rises 0.51m over 3.19m northwest-

to-southeast and was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.35m (S.1's base lies beyond excavation). Structure 68-1-1st was apparently erected atop this slope, its northwestern terraces (U.1,2) set into the ascent.

Time Span 2

Units 1 and 2 are stone facings that define the limits of Str. 68-1-1st's northwestern basal terrace and summit respectively. The former is set 0.16m into S.1 and rises a preserved 0.18m above that level; U.1 probably originally stood 0.30m above S.1, thereby allowing articulation with U.2. Stratum 1 continues to rise southeast of U.1, obviating the need for the introduction of sizable fill deposits to form the northwestern terrace. Nonetheless, approximately 0.04-0.16m of earth-and stone fill (U.3) backs U.1 and buries S.1; the soil is indistinguishable from S.2 which overlies construction here. The U.1/3 terrace is 1.73m wide northwest-southeast and is succeeded in the latter direction by U.2. The latter rises 0.23-0.29m above U.3's reconstructed surface. Stones comprising U.1 and 2 are a combination of angular chunks and cobbles the naturally flatter faces of which are generally oriented outwards. All rocks are set in a brown mud mortar and neither facing possesses chinking stones. Unit 2's stones are set in two fairly clear horizontal courses; U.1 lacks coursing. Rock sizes range from 0.09x0.1m up to 0.15x0.2m. Structure 68-1-1st rose, therefore, by means of two stone-faced ascents 0.59m on the northwest and was aligned 243 to 254 degrees.

Time Span 3

Stratum 2, a dark brown, coarse-textured, organic-rich soil, overlies S.1 to depths of 0.24-0.42m and buries most Str. 68-1-1st construction. Features 1 and 2 are moderately dense concentrations of stone architectural debris found embedded in S.2 and extending 1.54m northwest of U.1 and 0.92m northwest of U.2 respectively.

Structure 68-3

Structure 68-3 sits on the northeast patio corner, ca. 16.5m northeast of Str. 68-1 and 9.5m east of Str. 68-2. Fully 6.2m² were excavated revealing limited portions of the platform's southern flank up to the summit (Subop. 68C). Excavations were carried down to maximum depths of 0.46m below modern ground surface south of the building and 0.45m into and below construction, resulting in the recognition of a single construction phase.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Date</u>
68C/1	19 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	EPC
68C/2	15 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	LC, EPC
68C/3	sherds	Fill and Preconstruction (Secondary)	?

68C/4	empty	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	-
68C/5	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. 68-3-1st	U.1-5	-	-	LC, EPC
3	-	-	S.2	F.1	-

Time Span 1

Stratum 1, a light brown, fine-textured, hard-compacted soil containing a few small rocks, underlies Str. 68-3-1st construction and rises 0.3m over 2.86m south to north. This earth level was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.16m, though its base was not encountered in Subop. 68C.

Time Span 2

Units 1-3 delimit two ascending terraces (U.1,2) and the apparent summit margin (U.3) on Str. 68-3-1st's south flank. Unit 1 is set 0.15m into S.1 and rises a preserved 0.11m above that earth level. This facing likely ascended an additional 0.06m in antiquity, permitting articulation with U.2. Unit 1 is backed to the north by a fill composed of dark brown soil and angular stone chunks (U.4). Unit 4 was revealed to a maximum thickness of 0.1m. Though its base was not encountered, U.4 was probably not much thicker than 0.14m, based on the reconstructed top of the underlying S.1 in this area. The U.1/4 terrace is 0.63m wide and is succeeded by U.2, a 0.1-0.23m-high by 0.32-0.39m-wide wall. Unit 2, in turn, is backed by a brown earth fill (U.5) overlying the gradually ascending top of S.1 by 0.1-0.17m. The 1.52m north-south width of the U.2/5 terrace ends at U.3, the apparent southern summit boundary. Unit 3's base rests ca. 0.02m in S.1 and about 0.1m of the facing lies below the reconstructed top of U.5 fill; only 0.13m of the extant wall rises above the U.2/5 terrace. Stones making up U.1-3 consist primarily of angular chunks, most of which are light gray, fine-grained rocks that are probably andesite. A few cobbles were noted in U.1 but are not reported from the exposed segments of U.2 and 3. Little effort was devoted to orienting the naturally flatter aspects of rocks outward and coursing, as well as chinking stones, are absent. Rocks comprising U.1-3 are set in a brown mud mortar and range in size from 0.06x0.07m to 0.12x0.25m; U.3 seems to have been fashioned of, for the most part, smaller rocks, 0.06x0.097m to 0.08x0.13m.

Structure 68-3-1st's south side, therefore, stood 0.53m high, was ascended by means of three stone-faced risers, and was oriented 270 to 276 degrees.

Time Span 3

Stratum 2, a dark brown, hard-compacted, organic-rich soil, buries S.1 by as much as 0.44m and covers most of Str. 68-3-1st construction. Feature 1, a moderately dense concentration of stones dislodged from final-phase architecture, is found within S.2 and extending 0.86m south of U.3.

Chronological Summary

Artifacts diagnostic of both the Late Classic and Early Postclassic were recovered from Site 68 excavations. Unfortunately, it is not clear how these items relate to the revealed architecture. The nature of exposed construction and the patio-focused organization of the site hints at a Late Classic date for construction and initial use of the locus. Such a temporal placement is confirmed by the recovery of artifacts dating to this interval in terminal debris contexts at Str. 68-3-1st and, less securely, Str. 68-1-1st. Early Postclassic use of the site is particularly strongly attested to at the former building. It is still not clear whether Str. 68-1-1st was also inhabited at this time. Evidence for earlier and later activity at the settlement is lacking.

Architectural Summary

Structures 68-1-1st and 68-3-1st are faced by low terraces 0.63-1.73m wide, rise 0.53-0.54m on their exposed flanks, and cover a considerable range of orientations (243 to 276 degrees). Walls are low, 0.1-0.3m high, with Str. 68-3-1st having the most diminutive examples (rising 0.1-0.17m). These units were fashioned using unmodified stones, mostly angular chunks, though some river-rounded cobbles were incorporated as well. Horizontal coursing of rocks is rare, though attested to in Str. 68-1-1st's U.2, and chinking stones are absent in all cases. Variable effort was devoted to orienting the naturally flat surfaces of stones outward, this practice being more common on Str. 68-1-1st than at Str. 68-3-1st. Rocks comprising terrace and summit facings are set in a brown mud mortar. Fill generally consists of stones set in a brown soil matrix. As noted above, all construction at Site 68 is tentatively assigned to the Late Classic.