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PSB OP 187 Excavation Report

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Site 187

Site 187, in the Cececapa vega, occupies the western edge of a high shelf overlooking the Rio Ulua ca. 75m to the west. All but one of the eight platforms here (Str. 187-6) are 1-3.5m high. Structures 187-1/5 define a large plaza built atop a 1-2m-high natural rise on the southern site edge. The remaining monumental edifices, Strs. 187-7 and 8, form a line with Str. 187-5 that trends generally north-south along the western ledge margin. Site 192 is 105m north of the southern plaza and the Rio Cececapa lies roughly 150m in the same direction. Approximately 6 person-days of labor resulted in clearing 6.5m² on and around Strs. 187-3 and 4. The work was directed by E. Schortman, A. Carpenter, D. Marshall, and W. Teitz from June 9-11, 1986.

Structure 187-3

Structure 187-3 closes off the east side of the principal plaza formed by Strs. 187-1/5, ca. 16m southeast of Str. 187-4 and 5.5m east of Str. 187-1. The latter building is joined to Str. 187-3 by a saddle. Examination of the edifice's surface indicated the existence of a staircase projecting roughly 3m westward into the plaza. Suboperation 187D, a 1x2.2m trench, was dug on the approximate center of that putative access feature, reaching a maximum depth of 0.46m below modern ground surface outside construction (architectural fill was not probed).

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Date</u>
187D/1	sherds (very few)	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	-	-
2	Str. 187-3-1st Str, 187-3-Sub1	U.1, 2 U.3	-	-	LCL?
3	-	-	S.2	F.1	-

Time Span 1

Stratum 1 is a fine-textured, light brown soil containing numerous, small angular rocks, most of which appear to be limestone. Large rocks, similar in composition to the stones that pervade S.1, were recorded at the base of excavation. These extrusions may represent the parent material from which the S.1 rocks derive. Stratum 1 was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.24m (the base was not definitively encountered) and rises 0.07m over 1.56m from west to east. Approximately 0.05m of S.2, a dark brown, fine-textured soil containing relatively few stones,

overlies S.1 and lies beneath a portion of Str. 187-3-1st construction (U.2).

Time Span 2

Unit 1 is a stone facing composed, primarily, of cobbles and a few angular chunks, the naturally flatter faces of both of which have been oriented outwards (west). The wall is set 0.03m into S.1 and rises 0.28m above that earth level. Extending 0.43m west of U.1 is a riser composed of a single line of cut limestone blocks standing a preserved 0.1m high (U.2). Unit 2's base is 0.05-0.1m above S.1. Together, U.1 and 2 seem to comprise the initial steps in Str. 187-3-1st's outset staircase, ascending towards the summit in very small increments of roughly 0.1m. Unit 3 is a wall composed of angular chunks lying 1.12m west of U.2, running parallel to U.1 and 2. The naturally flatter aspects of U.3 stones are oriented eastward towards Str. 187-3-1st, suggesting that U.3 is the basal facing of a low (ca. 0.07m high) platform facing the latter edifice and invisible on the surface (Str. 187-3-Sub1). Unit 3 extends 0.08-0.1m into S.1. A cut block lying above and west of U.3 hints at the use of this material in Str. 187-3-Sub1 summit construction. The stones in all of the above walls are bound together by a brown mud mortar. No chinking stones were evident in the exposed portions of U.1-3 nor were there clear signs of horizontal coursing. Unit 1 and 3 stone sizes range from 0.07x0.15m up to 0.15x0.24m; the U.2 blocks measure 0.05x0.2m to 0.06x0.34m. Wall alignments vary somewhat: U.1, 2, and 3 are oriented 25, 16, and 30 degrees respectively. The U.2 stones, in particular, seemed skewed out of alignment where they were revealed in Subop. 187D.

Time Span 3

Continued deposition of S.2 followed Str. 187-3-1st's abandonment, eventually mantling S.1 by as much as 0.29m and covering most of U.1-3. A light scattering of stones fallen from terminal phase architecture was found throughout the east-west extent of the trench, embedded in S.2 (F.1).

Structure 187-4

Structure 187-4 defines the north patio flank, ca. 16m northwest of Str. 187-3 and 20.5m east of Str. 187-5. Suboperations 187B and 187C are two parallel trenches ca. 0.4m apart dug into the building's southern flank. Altogether, 4.3m² was cleared in the course of excavating these probes, reaching maximum depths of 0.6m and 0.65m below modern ground surface outside construction. Architectural fill was not investigated. A single construction phase was revealed in the course of this work.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Date</u>
187B/1	29 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	LCL
187B/2	9 sherds 2 censer fragments	Terminal Debris (Secondary) and Preconstruction	LCL

187B/3	7 sherds	Preconstruction Occupation Debris (Secondary)?	LCL
187C/1	22 sherds 1 obsidian piece 1 <u>bajareque</u> fragment	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	LCL

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. 187-4-1st Str. 187-4-Sub1	U.1 U.2, 3	-	-	LCL
3	-	-	S.2	F.1	-

Time Span 1

Stratum 1, a light brown, fine-textured soil containing many small rocks, underlies construction and was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.38m, though its base was not encountered. Much larger rocks project as much as 0.16m into S.1 from the base of excavation, hinting at the proximity of the parent material for the S.1 stones. Both large and small rocks are pink, light yellow, and white and are easily abraded. Though S.1 did yield artifacts, it seems likely that the items in question percolated down through the highly permeable S.1/2 interface from later deposits. Such rock-rich levels elsewhere in the middle Ulua drainage have generally proved to be culturally sterile on excavation.

Time Span 2

Unit 1, Str. 187-4-1st's southern basal facing, rises 0.19-0.22m above S.1 and is set 0.23-0.26m into that soil level. The wall is composed of two courses of cobbles, their naturally flatter faces oriented out to the south. Chinking stones were extensively used to fill in gaps among the larger rocks. Unit 2, 1.33-1.4m south of U.1, is the northern facing for a low platform (Str. 187-4-Sub12), fronting Str. 187-4-1st, that was not apprehended from the surface. This wall rises 0.2-0.26m above S.1 and extends 0.27-0.29m into that earth level. Two to three courses of cobbles packed round with a few chinking stones (many less than noted in U.1) comprise U.2. Two rocks that may have been intentionally faced were incorporated in U.2; both stones are light in color and easily cut. Unit 3 is a cobble level extending at least 0.4m back (south) from U.2's top, possibly representing a paved summit surface. Unit 1 and 2 stones range in size from 0.1x0.22m to 0.28x0.33m, with most falling towards the larger end of that continuum. Chinking stones generally measure 0.04x0.06m to 0.08x0.21m. All rocks are set in a brown mud mortar. Units 1 and 2 are nearly parallel to each other, aligned 285 and 290 degrees respectively.

Time Span 3

Stratum 2, a dark brown, fine-textured soil containing some rocks (many fewer than are found in S.1), buries S.1 by 0.23-0.32m along with U.1-3 by as much as 0.1m. A light scattering of rocks fallen from final-phase architecture was found spread more-or-less continuously between U.1 and 2, embedded in S.2 (F.1).

Chronological Summary

Occupation and construction at Site 187 seems limited to the Late Classic. Based on observed stratigraphic relations, Strs. 187-3-1st and 187-4-1st were raised soon after formation of S.1 ceased. Though the situation is unclear, it is likely that this area had not sustained settlement prior to erection of the Str. 187-1/5 plaza group.

Architectural Summary

Most facings uncovered at Site 187 are built of unmodified river cobbles and, to a lesser extent, angular chunks the flatter aspects of both of which are oriented outwards. The apparent exclusive use of cut limestone blocks in Str. 187-3-1st's U.2 is unusual here and elsewhere in the middle Ulua drainage outside Gualjoquito (Site 1); several intentionally modified stones may have been incorporated in Str. 187-4-Sub1 construction, however (U.2, see Str. 187-4-1st above). The unearthed portions of Str. 187-4-1st and 187-4-Sub 1 architecture are marked by both clear horizontal coursing and the use of chinking stones; revealed Str. 187-3-1st and 187-3-Sub 1 construction lacked these features. Wall heights range from 0.07-0.26m and their alignments run the gamut from 285-300 degrees. The sizes of principal rocks used in facings range from 0.07x0.15m to 0.28x0.33m, measurements for chinking stones fall out on the continuum between 0.04x0.06m to 0.08x0.21m. A brown mud mortar was used as a bonding agent in all walls and surfaces. Only one stone pavement was tentatively identified, U.3 on Str. 187-4-Sub 1's summit.

A consistent pattern observed in the excavation of both edifices is the pairing of major platforms with much lower edifices situated on the former's plaza-facing side (Strs. 187-3-1st and 187-3-Sub1, Strs. 187-4-1st and 187-4-Sub1. Only 1.12-1.4m separates buildings in the dyad from each other, hinting at possible functional linkages between them.