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PVN Op 470 Excavation Report

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Site 470

Site 470 lies roughly 3.1km southwest of La Sierra on a terrace overlooking the Quebrada de Agua Sucia. That stream is ca. 175m to the north of Site 470. Sites 471 and 175 are 100m to the north and 250m to the east, in turn. The field in which Site 470 is located was being plowed using heavy machinery when the settlement was first described in 1995 (Sites 470 and 471 are in the same field which, in that year, was devoted to growing sorghum). Unlike Site 471 to the north, buildings at Site 470 could still be recognized from their slight (ca. 0.25-0.5m high) projections above surrounding terrain. Nevertheless, it was clear that the visible edifices had been severely damaged by plowing; Str. 470-3 was the most seriously disrupted, roughly one-third of Str. 470-2 was destroyed, while Str. 470-1 seemed to have suffered the least damage. The above constructions are irregularly arranged around a patio access to which was not seriously impeded by architecture. Investigation of Site 470 was intended to: 1.) advance inferences concerning Late Classic behavior and material patterns in a heretofore largely ignored portion of the Naco valley (the southern fringes); 2.) help evaluate the impact of mechanized plowing on prehistoric remains located in close proximity to ground surface. Structures 470-1 and 470-2 were cleared over approximately 50% and 100% of their total extents, ca. 56m² being exposed during the course of this work. Research, conducted from March 30-April 19, 1995 was directed by C. Gevock-Delahaye.

Structure 470-1

Structure 470-1 occupies the patio's northwest corner, ca. 9.6m northwest of Str. 470-2 and 13m northwest of Str. 470-3 (unexcavated). The terrain surrounding Str. 470-1 is more-or-less flat. As noted above, about one-third of Str. 470-1, on the northeast and southeast, had been sheered off, probably during the course of preparing the field containing Sites 470 and 471 for planting. Excavations, conducted within Subop. 470B, therefore, concentrated on those western segments of the building that were still standing in 1995. Approximately 17m² was dug within Subop. 470B, excavation being carried down to a maximum depth of 0.49m beneath modern ground surface outside architecture (construction fill was not investigated). A single building 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>Date</u>
1	Str. 470-1-1st	U.1-6	-	-	LCLIII
2	-	-	S.1	F.1	-

Time Span 1

Structure 470-1-1st is a platform delimited on its exposed northwestern and southwestern sides by facings (U.1 and 2) that ascend 0.3-0.35m directly to the earthen summit. The summit

supports at least one compartment (Room 1) that covers 1.1x1.5m and is delimited on the southwest and southeast by foundations that stand 0.2-0.35m high and are 0.4-0.5m wide (U.3 and 4). The enclosure's northwestern flank is open while on the northeast it is bounded by a 0.22-0.26m-high stone-faced bench that covers 1.7x1.9m (U.5). A 0.3m-high by 0.22m-wide wall (U.6) runs the 0.5m from U.5's northern corner to the northwestern basal facing (U.1). Unit 6 may have separated Room 1 from the remainder of the summit to the northeast; the latter area was largely destroyed by mechanized plowing.

Structure 470-1-1st is a 0.3-0.35m-high platform that measures at least 5.3x3.4m, and is oriented roughly 26 degrees. At least one earthen-floored room, encompassing 1.7m², caps the building. Open on the northwest, this enclosure is bounded by low stone foundations on the southwest and southeast and a 0.22-0.26m-high bench on the northeast. The latter measures 1.7x1.9m. A low wall running northwest from the bench's northern corner may have separated the southwestern portion of the summit from whatever lay to the northeast. All facings and footings are built of roughly shaped tuff blocks the flat faces of which are directed outwards. A few chinking stones are packed in around the larger rocks, all stones being set in a dark gray mud mortar. Walls were usually preserved only one rock high, rendering the identification of coursing moot. In those few cases where facings survived at greater heights, such as U.1's northeastern end, there were signs that the larger rocks had been laid in more-or-less clear rows.

Time Span 2

Structure 470-1-1st was covered after its abandonment by a hard-compacted dark gray (10YR 4/1) soil (S.1). Stratum 1 accumulated to as much as 0.49m next to and over the platform, burying all final-phase architecture (S.1's base was not encountered, however). A moderate to light concentration of stones fallen from Str. 470-1-1st was found overlying the edifice and extending for at least 1m on all sides (F.1).

Structure 470-2

Structure 470-2, on the southern patio margin, is ca. 9.6m southeast of Str. 470-1 and 5m southwest of Str. 470-3. The terrain in Str. 470-2's immediate environs is relatively flat. Digging here, conducted within Subop. 470C, cleared ca. 39m² in the course of exposing all of this building. Excavations were pursued to maximum depths of 0.45m and 0.62m below modern ground surface outside and within the building's limits, resulting in the identification of two construction phases.

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	-	LCLII?
2	Str. 470-2-2nd	U.1-4	-	-	LCLII, III?
3	Str. 470-2-1st	U.5-9	-	-	LCLIII

Time Span 1

A hard-compacted dark gray (10YR 4/1) soil, marked by a scattering of white (possibly tuff) inclusions (S.1), underlies revealed construction by as much as 0.22m (S.1's base lies beyond our excavation limits).

Time Span 2

Structure 470-2-2nd is a surface-level building defined on all sides by stone foundations (U.1-4) that are 0.16-0.71m high by 0.4-0.55m wide. Unit 3, the northern footing, is the tallest of the set and, at 0.71m high, seems unusually large to have solely been a support for a perishable upper wall. Possibly, U.3's height was enhanced during renovations occurring in TS.3 as part of the effort to separate the original Room 1 from the newly constructed enclosure north of U.3. Room 1, bounded by U.1-4, is an earthen-floored compartment that contains no built-in furniture and encompasses 1.7x2.8m. The enclosure was entered through a 0.5m-wide doorway set east of center in Str. 470-2-2nd's northern footing (U.3).

Structure 470-2-2nd covers 2.7x3.75m, contains a single room that measures 4.8m², and is aligned ca.1 degrees. The foundations are made of roughly modified tuff stones the flat faces of which are oriented outwards. Two examples of more carefully faced cut tuff blocks were recorded in U.2, though they were not identified elsewhere. All rocks are set in a dark gray mud mortar.

Time Span 3

Modifications visited on Str. 470-2 during this interval resulted in the widening of Room 1's eastern foundation, creation of Room 2 north of, and bordering, Room 1, and the addition of a low terrace or pavement off Room 1's western and southern faces. The first two actions are closely related. Unit 5, Room 2's eastern footing, is particularly broad, 1.15m across. Rather than have it be offset 0.35m at its junction with U.2, the latter was expanded this distance to the east, resulting in the creation of a single, continuous foundation line on this side of the building. Concern with such niceties does not seem to have burdened the architects on the opposite side where Room 2's western footing (U.7) is offset 0.35m west of Room 1's northwest corner. In general, therefore, Room 2 is bounded by U. 3, 5, 6, and 7, the last three standing 0.2-0.3m high and measuring 0.4-1.15m across. The compartment delimited by these foundations encompasses 1.7x3.95m and contains no built-in furniture. The unusually great width of U.5 may point to its use as both a support for a perishable upper wall and a bench. The 0.5m-wide doorway noted earlier in U.3 (TS.2) seems to have now permitted movement between Rooms 1 and 2. No passageways to the exterior were noted, occupants apparently having to step up and over the low perimeter footings and through doors set within the perishable upper walls.

Also added at about this time is U.8, a 0.09-0.2m-high terrace that wraps around Str. 470-2-1st's western and southern sides. This element is 0.8-1.04m wide and intersects Room 1's western foundation (U.4) ca. 0.4m south of that entity's junction with U.3. Unit 8 was traced for 3.5m east of its southwestern corner on Str. 470-1-1st's southern side before it could no longer

be discerned. Whether this ambiguous ending is a result of poor preservation or represents a construction never completed we cannot say. Unit 8 seems to have been built in two pieces; the first extends 1.7m south from its intersection with U.4, the remainder having been added at a later time.

Unit 9 is a 0.1-0.15m-high by 0.35m-wide wall that projects 0.6m north from Room 2's northern footing (U.6). This short wall joins U.6, 0.8m east of its northwest corner with U.7. Unit 9's architectural significance is unclear; it may be part of yet another surface-level enclosure that was appended to Room 2 but open on two sides.

The upshot of the aforementioned renovations is the creation of a surface-level building that encompasses 4.45x4.9m (measured across the center), contains two earthen-floored rooms set in a north-south line, and maintains Str. 470-2-2nd's orientation of 1 degree (U.6 on the north diverges from this alignment at 278 degrees). Room 2 on the north covers 6.7m² and, like its still-extant predecessor on the south, Room 1 (4.8m²), does not have any built-in furniture. The 1.15m-wide foundation that delimits Room 2 on the east, however, is sufficiently broad that it could have served as both wall support and bench. Movement between Rooms 1 and 2 was through a 0.5m-wide door within their shared foundation, though no entryways linking the enclosures with the exterior were noted. Most likely, doors leading into the building were cut into the perishable walls supported by the low, bordering foundations. A 0.09-0.2m-high terrace borders Room 1 on all but 0.4m of that compartment's western flank and for an undetermined distance along the south. A casual construction, possibly a lean-to, seems to have been appended to Str. 470-2-1st's northern foundation.

All terrace facings and footings are built of roughly shaped tuff stones whose flatter aspects face outwards. A single well-shaped tuff masonry block is incorporated into U.8. All rocks are set in a dark gray mud mortar.

Time Span 4

Following abandonment, Str. 470-2-1st was almost completely covered by the continued natural deposition of S.1. Embedded within this layer is a light scattering of stones fallen from final-phase architecture (F.1). Feature 1 rocks are found in small numbers across Str. 470-2-1st and extend for 0.87m north of the building.

Chronological Summary

Occupation of Site 470 may have begun as early as Late Classic II. Ceramics diagnostic of this span were unearthed during the excavation of Str. 470-2 and may derive from soil laid down prior to the initiation of construction on this spot. At the very least, there is a good indication that the southern part of Site 470 was occupied now. Structure 470-2-2nd may have been raised during the Late Classic II/III transition but the final version of the building was almost certainly built and used in Late Classic III. There is no evidence for any occupation or construction predating Late Classic III at Str. 470-1. It appears, therefore, that settlement at Site 470 spans Late Classic II-III, with occupation and building activities peaking in the latter period. There is no evidence of a Postclassic presence at Site 470.