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PVN Op 471 Excavation Report

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Site 471

Site 471 is approximately 3km southwest of La Sierra on the south bank of the Quebrada de Agua Sucia. The latter water course is about 75m to the north while Sites 470 and 175 lie ca. 100m and 275m to the south and east/southeast respectively. The field containing Site 471 had undergone mechanized plowing in preparation for planting sorghum when the settlement was first visited in 1995. Prehistoric occupation was recognized from the surface scatter of building debris and artifacts, these materials forming three concentrations that, we thought, might indicate the presence of heavily disturbed buildings. These aggregates are loosely arranged around a patio access to which was not appreciably restricted by architecture. Excavations initiated at Site 471 were designed to accomplish two objectives: 1.) reconstruct Late Classic behavioral and material patterns along the southern valley margins, an area largely ignored by earlier research; 2.) assess the effects of mechanized plowing on prehistoric remains located close to the surface. All three putative occupation loci identified within Site 471 were excavated, a total of ca. 62m² being cleared in the course of this work (Subops. 471B-D). Investigations revealed the remains of four edifices, three of which were cleared over 75% or more of their total areas. Architecture had been disturbed but the basic forms and dimensions of the excavated structures were still discernible. M. Kneppler directed research at Site 471 from April 3-19, 1995.

Structure 471-1

Structure 471-1 occupies the patio's southeastern corner, 12.5m east of Str. 471-2 and 14.6m south of Str. 471-3. The terrain surrounding Str. 471-1 rises gradually from east to west, ascending 0.34m across 5m in that direction, and displays a comparable north-to-south slope. Digging, conducted within Subop. 471B, uncovered roughly 34m² and reached maximum depths of 0.31m and 0.32m below modern ground surface outside and within the building, respectively. A single construction phase was recognized 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. 471-1-1st	U.1-4	-	-	LCLIII, II
2	-	-	S.1, 2	-	-

Time Span 1

Structure 471-1-1st is a surface-level building defined by stone foundations (U.1-4) that stand an extant 0.18-0.42m high and measure 0.4-1m across. These footings enclose an earthen-floored room accessed through two doorways, one each in its southern and western corners. The passages face southwestward, away from the patio, and are 0.75m (western corner) and 1.15m wide (southern corner). The compartment to which they give access encompasses 3.05x4.5m (measured across the center) and does not contain built-in furniture or any hint of subdivisions. The particularly broad northeastern foundation (U2, ca.1m wide) seems unusually substantial for

a footing and may have also served as a bench or shelf.

Overall, Str. 471-1-1st covers 4.7x5.9m (again, measured across the center and inferring the width of the southern foundation (U.1) the back of which was not revealed) and is aligned roughly 335 degrees. The featureless, earthen-floored compartment bounded by Str. 471-1-1st's footings covers 13.7m². All foundations are built of cobbles the naturally flatter faces of which are directed outwards. Chinking stones are packed round the larger rocks and all are set in a brown mud mortar. The extent of horizontal coursing could not be discerned given the low heights of the footings, most of which survived to only one rock high.

Time Span 2

Following abandonment, Str. 471-1-1st was blanketed by the natural deposition of S.1 and 2, a dark brown (10YR 4/2-4/3) soil that varies only slightly in hue; overlying S.2 is 10YR 4/3. This layer covers all extant Str. 471-1-1st construction by 0.06-0.12m. Stones that presumably had been components of Str. 471-1-1st's U.1-4 were found scattered across ground surface but few were recorded embedded within S.1 and 2. Presumably, this paucity of tumbled architectural debris *not* associated with recent plowing partially reflects the restricted use of stone in the original edifice.

Structures 471-2 and 471-Sub1

Structure 471-2 is on the southwest patio corner, 12.5m west of Str. 471-1 and 17.9m southwest of Str. 471-3. Structure 471-Sub1 was uncovered 4.7m north-northeast of Str. 471-2 and appears to be part of a previously unrecognized edifice that closes off the patio's western flank. The terrain surrounding the above buildings is more-or-less flat. Excavations pursued within Subop. 471C cleared approximately 20m², digging being carried down to maximum depths of 0.35m and 0.23m beneath modern ground level outside and within Str. 471-2's limits. A single construction phase for each edifice 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. 471-2-1st Str. 471-Sub1-1st	U.1-4 U.5-6	-	-	LCLIII, II
2	-	-	S.1, 2	F.1	-

Time Span 1

Structure 471-2-1st is a surface-level edifice defined by stone foundations (U.1-4) that rise 0.12-0.29m high and are 0.5-0.6m wide. Unit 3, the western footing, was not fully cleared, its exterior (western) face lying beyond excavation limits for the most part. What was uncovered of this unit, however, suggests that it may have been as much as 1m wide over an undetermined portion of its full extent (U.3 is 0.6m across where it intersects U.4 on the south). Unit 2, the

northern foundation, is poorly preserved and its width is reconstructed from a 0.6m-long segment of the footing's northern face that was still intact.

The room contained by U.1-4 encompasses 2.4m on a side and was entered through a 0.5m-wide doorway in the southwest corner. Said passage faces south, away from the patio. Structure 471-2-1st's interior was left largely unexcavated, though there were no signs of built-in furniture or interior room divisions. As was the case with Str. 471-1-1st's U.2, U.3's relatively great width may signal its use as both footing and bench/shelf. As noted earlier, we do not know the length of that portion of U.3 that is an estimated 1m wide. Overall, Str. 471-2-1st covers 3.5x3.6-4m (depending where on where the east-west dimension of U.3 is measured) and is oriented roughly 18 degrees.

Only limited portions of Str. 471-Sub1-1st's southern and western perimeter walls were unearthed (U.5 and 6, respectively). These low stone constructions are 0.2-0.25m wide and form an "L," the long stem of which was revealed running 1.8m north-south (U.6) while the leg (U.5) projects at least 1m eastward from U.6's southern terminus. The building delimited by U.5 and 6 is aligned approximately 355 degrees. Though far from clear, the diminutive sizes of U.5 and 6 suggest that they were built as foundations that bounded at least one surface-level room to the east.

All footings uncovered in Subop. 471C are fashioned of unmodified river cobbles, the naturally flatter aspects of which face outwards. Chinking pebbles fill in the gaps among the larger rocks and all of the stones are set in a brown mud mortar.

Time Span 2

After Strs. 471-2-1st and 471-Sub1-1st fell into disuse, they were covered by S.1 and 2. These naturally deposited dark brown soils (10YR 4/2-4/3) are distinguished only by overlying S.2's slightly different color (10YR 4/3). Together, S.1 and 2 blanket all surviving portions of Str. 471-2-1st's and 471-Sub1-1st's architecture. A few small rocks are embedded in S.1 and extend at least 0.8m south of Str. 471-2-1st (F.1). The relative infrequency of these stones implies that rocks were employed sparingly in the construction of Strs. 471-2-1st and 471-Sub1-1st.

Structure 471-3

Structure 471-3 is on the northern patio margin, ca. 14.6m northwest and 17.9m northeast of Strs. 471 and 472, respectively. The terrain in Str. 471-3's environs rises north-to-south away from the Quebrada de Agua Sucia but is level east-west. All of Str. 471-3 was cleared in the course of excavating 8m² within Subop. 471D. Digging was pursued to a maximum depth of 0.44m below modern ground surface revealing a single construction episode.

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	Str. 471-3-1st	U.1-3	-	F.1, 2	LCLIII, II

Time Span 1

Structure 471-3-1st is a diminutive surface-level construction delimited by cobble walls (U.1-3) that are 0.1-0.2m high and measure 0.2-0.45m across. The southwestern wall (U.1) is 1.8m long and is integrated with U. 2 and 3. The last two constructions project 0.7 and 0.4m northeast from U.1, respectively. Units 2 and 3, 0.2m and 0.45m wide, intersect U.1 at points 0.2m west and 0.3m east of the former's eastern and western ends. Together, these three stone constructions define an earthen floored space that encompasses 0.6x0.7m and is open on the northeast. Two areas of seemingly fire-altered soil (5YR 4/3, "reddish brown") are ca. 0.2m and 1.75m west of Str. 471-3-1st (F.1 and 2) at about the same level as the bases of U.1-3. Feature 1, the closer of the two, covers roughly 0.25m across while F.2 is ca. 0.3m in diameter. No evidence of fired earth was found within Str. 471-3-1st.

In general, Str. 471-3-1st encompasses 0.95x1.8m and is oriented ca. 282 degrees. Units 1-3 are built of relatively small, unmodified river cobbles the naturally flatter faces of which are not consistently placed looking outwards. A few chinking stones are set around the larger rocks and all are bound together with a brown mud mortar. Horizontal coursing is not an issue here as the footings are no more than one rock high.

Time Span 2

Following abandonment, Str. 471-3-1st was blanketed by the natural deposition of S.1 and 2, grayish brown to brown soils (10YR 5/2-5-3) that are distinguished solely on the basis of the slightly different color (10YR 5/3) exhibited by overlying S.2. These soils combine to cover Str. 471-3-1st by 0.22-0.28m. Large quantities of ceramics are embedded within S.1 but rocks are almost completely absent in both levels. Pottery sherds are found for up to 0.12m above Str. 471-3-1st's preserved top.

Chronological Summary

Site 471's occupation sequence appears to be restricted to the early part of Late Classic III. All four excavated buildings yielded terminal debris ceramic assemblages dominated by Late Classic III diagnostics, but with a consistent, albeit minority, representation of Late Classic II markers. This pattern suggests use of the site during a period when distinctive Late Classic II styles were on the wane, being replaced, but not yet totally eclipsed, by materials pertaining to Late Classic III.

Site 471, therefore, seems to fall towards the middle of the temporal range represented by its southern neighbor, Site 470. They both undergo roughly contemporary demographic and architectural florescences during Late Classic III, though Site 470 was apparently occupied first (during Late Classic II) and may have persisted longer (well into Late Classic III).