

1985

PSB OP 308 Excavation Report

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Site 308

Site 308 is 100m west of Site 307 and 1km south of the Quebrada Aguacate/Zapote. It consists of four visible constructions organized around a patio that they enclose on all sides. Structures 308-1 and 308-4 on the plaza's north and east sides were excavated under the direction of Daniel Brennan and Julie Benyo in May 1985; fully 23.5m² was cleared in the course of this work.

Structure 308-1

Structure 308-1 lies 8m northwest of Str. 308-4 and 3m east of Str. 308-2 on the north margin of the Site 308's central patio. Excavations conducted here within Subop. 308C were largely restricted to a 1m-wide trench that ran for 10.3m across the building's full east-west width. An additional 2.7m² was cleared to trace out architectural features exposed in the western portion of Subop 308C (13m² were cleared here in all). Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 0.7m and 0.92m below modern ground surface outside and within construction, respectively. Two construction episodes, both included in Str. 308-1-1st, were tentatively recognized in the course of this work.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
308C/1	10 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308C/2	sherds, 1 mano	Mixed, Occupation and Terminal Occupation Debris	1,3
308C/3	25 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308C/4	unprocessed	Mixed, Fill and Occupation Debris	1,3
308C/5	15 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308C/6	empty	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308C/7	human bones, sherds	Burial	2
308C/8	unprocessed	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308C/9	18 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308C/10	153 sherds	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1
308C/11	13 sherds	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1
308C/12	unprocessed	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308C/13	empty	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308C/14	4 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308C/15	85 sherds, 2 pieces of	Fill	2

	obsidian			
308C/16	1 sherd, 1 mano	Fill		2
308C/17	empty	Fill		3
308C/18	empty	Preconstruction		1
308C/19	empty	Preconstruction		1
308C/20	empty	Fill		3
308C/21	empty	Preconstruction		1
308C/22	empty	Mixed, Fill, Preconstruction		1,2
308C/23	unprocessed	Occupation Debris (Secondary)		1
308C/24	empty	Fill		2
308C/25	unprocessed	Occupation Debris (Secondary)		1
308C/26	empty	Preconstruction		1
308C/27	1 shell	Fill		2
308C/29	empty	Terminal Debris (Secondary)		3
308C/30	unprocessed	Fill		2
308C/31	unprocessed	Mixed, Fill, Occupation Debris		1,2
308C/32	empty	Preconstruction		1

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. 308-1-1st	U.1-5	-	S.D.1	
3	Str. 308-1-1st	U.6-10	-	-	
4	-	-	S.1	F.1	

Time Span 1

At least 0.5m of S.1, a brown soil, was laid down prior to the erection of Str. 308-1-1st in TS.2. Stratum1's base was not encountered in our excavations. The lower 0.2m of this soil layer as it was exposed in Subop. 308C contains a moderately dense concentration of small stones that appear to have been water-worn. The paucity of artifacts associated with these pebbles and from the lower-most 0.3m

of S.1 generally indicates that there was little human presence in the immediate area of what would become Str. 308-1-1st when this soil was being deposited during TS.1.

Time Span 2

Structure 308-1-1st was, during this phase, a platform defined on the east and west by stone facings standing 0.19m (U.2) and 0.23m (U.1) tall. Unit 1 gives way to a 0.8m-wide terrace while its eastern counterpart, U.2, defines the east edge of a terrace that measures 0.69m across. Both earthen surfaces lead to stone-faced step-ups to the summit; U.3 on the east rising 0.2m above the U.2 terrace while U.4 stands 0.23m above the U.1 terrace. The earthen-floored summit measures 3.68m across east-west and lacked built-in architecture within the 1m-wide portion revealed in Subop. 308C. Structure 308-1-1st's fill at this time (U.5) consists of a dense concentration of medium to large rocks set in a brown soil matrix.

Inserted within the U.5 fill, 0.32m below the inferred floor of the summit, was a human burial (S.D.1). Special Deposit 1 is 1.32m east of U.4, the western summit step-up, and does not seem to have been set within a formal construction nor are there signs that it was intruded after U.5 was deposited. Instead, the body was apparently interred with the fill during TS.2. The burial is of a single, articulated individual, tightly flexed, with the head oriented to the southeast, the entire body being aligned approximately 133 degrees. No grave goods were found associated with this individual.

By the conclusion of TS. 2, Str. 308-1-1st was a stone-faced, stone-and-earth-filled platform that stood 0.39-0.46m high, measured 5.2m east-west, and was oriented ca. 355 degrees. The building was bordered on the east and west by low, narrow terraces that stood 0.19m and 0.23m tall and were 0.69m and 0.8m wide, respectively. There is no evidence that the 3.68m-wide (east-west) summit supported such built-in architecture as a bench, though our limited investigations of the superstructure leave open this possibility. The burial (S.D.1) found near the center of the building seems to be contemporary with Str. 308-1-1st's initial construction. All facings were made of unmodified river cobbles the naturally flatter surfaces of which were directed outwards. These stones were set in a mud mortar. The exposed terrace and summit surfaces were fashioned of earth.

Time Span 3

Structure 308-1-1st retained its orientation and overall height from TS.2. The principal changes attested to in our work took the form of additions made to the building's east and west flanks. Unit 7, on the east, is a 0.19m-high terrace that intersects U.2 near its estimated center and extends 1.09m east from that earlier wall. Unit 7 turns a corner and heads south, completely covering U.2 south of this juncture whereas the latter wall remains visible for its full height north of that point. On the west, U.6 (0.23m high) runs up against and completely covers U.1, the previous western basal facing. The fill backing U.6 (U.10) consists of small to large stones set in a brown soil matrix. Though exposed over a north-south distance of 1m near the platform's center, it seems likely that U.6 runs the full length of Str. 308-1-1st on this side. Unit 8, in turn, is a 0.13m-high stone-faced and -surfaced terrace that intersects U.6 near its inferred mid-point. This construction seems to be a mirror image of U.7 on the east in that U.8 extends west from its juncture with the platform's basal facing (in this case for 0.9m) and then turns south. Unlike its eastern counterpart, U.8 does not completely bury the basal facing it joins; U.6 still projects 0.1m above U.8 south of the junction and stands full unencumbered by later architecture north

of this point. The fill backing U.8 consists almost completely of brown earth (U.9). The way in which U.6 and 9 interdigitated suggests that U.6, 8, and 9 were added as part of the same construction effort.

As of TS.3's completion, Str. 308-1-1st stood 0.39-0.46m high, measured 5.75m east-west, and was oriented about 355 degrees. Extending 1.09m and 0.9m out from the platform on the east and west is a matching pair of low (0.19m and 0.13m high) stone-faced projections that run south from near the building's center-line. North of these additions Str. 308-1-1st's basal facings remained fully exposed while to the south they were largely buried behind the projections; U.6, the western basal facing, still rose 0.1m above the fill backing U.8 on this flank. It may be that U.7 and 8 were parts of a step that wrapped around Str. 308-1-1st's south side and provided formal access to the summit from that direction. Excavations were not carried far enough to test that proposition. All facings made now were fashioned of unmodified river cobbles the naturally flatter aspects of which were directed outwards. These stone were set in a mud mortar. Most exposed surfaces in this period were still made of earth. The one exception is the stone pavement backing U.7 on the east (included in U.7). How far this paving continued south is unknown as only 0.3m of this unit was exposed in Subop. 308C.

Time Span 4

Following abandonment, all but the very highest portions of Str. 308-1-1st were covered by the continued natural deposition of S.1. Embedded in the upper portions of this soil are stones that had likely fallen from final-phase architecture (F.1). These rocks are nowhere common and were traced for ca. 1m east of Str. 308-1-1st where they were most prominent.

Structure 308-4

Structure 308-4, on the central patio's east flank, is 8m southeast of Str. 308-1, 9m northeast of Str. 308-3, and 16m southeast and across the plaza from Str. 308-2. Digging here was carried out within Subop. 308B, primarily a 1m-wide by 10m-long trench that ran north-south across the platform's approximate center. An area of 0.5m² was excavated immediately west of Subop. 308B to expose SD.2 (10.5m² dug in total). A plastic water pipe, ca. 0.06m in diameter, was found running east-west across Str. 308-4-1st's summit. It was set 0.13m below modern ground surface and, while it caused some localized disturbance of the building's fill such disruptions were not extensive. Excavations were pursued to maximum depths of 1.12m and 1.2m below modern ground surface outside and within architecture, respectively. This work, directed by Daniel Brennan and Julie Benyo, identified one principal construction phase and an additional period during which the edifice was renovated (all included in Str. 308-1-1st).

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
308B/1	40 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308B/2	empty	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308B/3	unprocessed	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1
308B/5	15 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308B/6	unprocessed	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1

308B/7	55 sherds, freshwater clam shells	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308B/8A	empty	Terminal Debris (Secondary) Disturbed by Modern Construction	3
308B/8B	unprocessed	Fill	3
308B/9	101 sherds, 7 pieces of obsidian, 7 jute shells, 3 incense burner fragments	Fill	3/LCL
308B/10	human bones	Burial	3
308B/11	unprocessed	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3
308B/12	57 sherds, 2 pieces of obsidian	Mixed, Occupation Debris, Fill, Burial	1,3
308B/13	5 sherds, 309 human bone fragments	Burial	3
308B/14	104 sherds, 7 stones, 2 shell fragments	Fill	2?
308B/15	25 sherds, 3 stones, 9 bajareque fragments	Mix, Fill, Occupation Debris	1,2
308B/16	unprocessed	Mix, Fill, Occupation Debris	1,2
308B/17	2 sherds, 2 bajareque fragments, 1 freshwater clam shell	Mix, Fill, Occupation Debris	1,2
308B/18	36 sherds	Fill	2
308B/19	18 sherds	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1
308B/20	3 sherds, 7 pieces of obsidian, 3 jute shells	Fill	2
308B/21	13 sherds, 1 shell	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1
308B/22	75 sherds, 6 jute shells, 1 incense burner fragment	Mix, Fill, Occupation Debris	1,3/ECL, LCL

308B/23	unprocessed	Fill	2
308B/24	unprocessed	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1
308B/25	8 sherds	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1
308B/26	unprocessed	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1
308B/27	unprocessed	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1
308B/28	10 sherds	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1/ECL, LCL
308B/29	18 sherds	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1/LCL
308B/30	unprocessed	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1
308B/31	25 sherds	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1/ECL?, LCL
308B/32	empty	Preconstruction	1
308B/33	1 green stone bead, 1 stone celt, 1 candelero fragment	S.D.3	2

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	-	ECL?
2	Str. 308-4-1st	U.2-5	-	S.D.3	LCL
3	Str. 308-4-1st	U.1, 6-8	-	S.D.2, F.1	LCL
4	-	-	S.1	F.1	

Time Span 1

The earliest activity recognized in the vicinity of Str. 308-4 is the deposition of the brown soil designated here as S.1. At least 0.8m of this earth was deposited now, though S.1's base was not encountered in our excavations. The recovery of artifacts from throughout S.1's lower portions points to human occupation nearby as this earth layer was being introduced.

Time Span 2

Structure 308-4-1st was, at this time, a platform bordered on the north and south by stone facings that stood 0.42m (U.3) and 0.26m (U.2) high, respectively. Unit 3 leads directly up to the summit whereas U.2 fronts a terrace that runs 0.92m back (north) to U.4. The latter is a 0.16m-high stone-faced step-up to the summit. Said summit measures 3.54m north-south and lacked any built-in architecture within the 1m-wide swath of it exposed within Subop. 308B. The fill contained by U.2-4 consists of densely packed medium to large cobbles set in a mud matrix (U.5).

Set 0.05m below U.3, the northern basal facing, was a collection of three items that comprise S.D.3 (lot 308B/33). These objects, a green stone bead, polished stone celt, and

candelero fragment, are distinct from other items found in excavations here. That coupled with their close juxtaposition imply that these three items comprised a purposefully placed offering, possibly dedicatory to the erection of Str. 308-4-1st. No pit outline was noted in association with S.D.3.

As TS.2 drew to a close, Str. 308-4-1st was a 0.42m-high, stone-faced and -filled platform, that encompassed 4.6m north-south, and was aligned ca. 273 degrees. The building was bordered on the north by a single riser that led directly to the summit. On the south a 0.92m-wide terrace intervened between ancient ground surface and the summit. The latter space was 3.54m wide north-south and lacked clear evidence of built-in constructions. Deposition of a green stone bead, polished stone celt, and ceramic candelero fragment beneath the approximate center of the building's north wall may have initiated construction here. All facings were made of unmodified river cobbles the naturally flatter aspects of which were directed outwards. These rocks were set in an earth mortar. Exposed summit and terrace surfaces were fashioned of earth.

Time Span 3

Structure 308-4-1st retained its height and orientation during this interval. The primary changes noted in our work involved additions to the building's north flank that expanded the edifice in this direction. The first step in this effort apparently involved digging a pit (F.1) 2.16m north of U.3, Str. 308-4-1st's north basal wall during TS.2. This pit measures 1.47m across north-south, has a gently rounded base, and is 0.5m deep. Feature 1's north-south cross-section is asymmetrical; the pit drops down 0.5m over 0.06m on the south whereas on the north the descent is more gradual, 0.5m over 0.5m horizontal distance. Set on the base of F.1 is a human burial (S.D.2). Special Deposit 2 is a flexed and articulated interment, the head set to the east, and the whole burial oriented roughly 75 degrees. No goods were clearly associated with S.D.2.

The aforementioned burial was then covered with a fill composed of small to large cobbles set in a brown soil (U.8). Unit 8 consists primarily of earth where it directly overlies S.D.2 for 0.1-0.17m. Above this point there is a dense packing of stones extending to the top of F.1. Set on U.8 are three parallel constructions running east-west. Unit 7, the northernmost of these entities, is 2.93m north of U.3 and is a 0.25m-high stone facing set on the north edge of the F.1 pit. Lying 0.65m south of U.7 is U.6. The latter appeared as a line of stones set flush with the top of the fill backing U.7 to the south (that stone-and-earth fill is included in U.8). There is no sign that U.6 ever rose above U.7 nor does it ever appear to have been free-standing. Unit 1, in turn, is 1.28m south of U.7 and sits above the southern end of F.1. Unit 1 may have projected 0.04m above the fill backing U.7, constituting a very low border for a terrace that extends 1.65m back (south) to U.3 and Str. 308-4-1st's summit.

In general, TS.3 saw the addition of two low terraces to Str. 308-4-1st's north flank. The first, bordered by U.7 on the north, is 0.25m high by 1.28m wide while its successor, defined by U.1 on the north, rose 0.04m above U.7 and ran 1.65m to the south where it was succeeded by U.3. The latter construction now served as a stone-faced step-up to the summit. The place of U.6 within this sequence is unclear. What is fairly certain is that U.1, 6, and 7 were built on earth-and stone fill placed over a pit dug off Str. 308-4-1st's north side, that declivity likely serving, in part, as a repository for a human burial set directly below U.6.

As a result of these renovations, Str. 308-4-1st stood 0.42m high on the south and 0.63m tall on the north (the ground drops off here from south to north), measured 7.53m wide north-south, and was

oriented 273 degrees. It was still fronted by a 0.26m-high by 0.92m-wide terrace on the south while on the north two low terraces (0.25m and 0.04m high, north-to-south) ascend to the summit. The northern terraces are 1.28 and 1.65m wide while the summit retains its width of 3.54m. All facings added now were made of river-worn stones set in a mud mortar; the naturally flatter faces of these rocks tended to be oriented outwards. Terrace surfaces were made of earth.

Time Span 4

Following Str. 308-4-1st's abandonment, continued deposition of S.1 covered all but the highest portions of TS.3 architecture (as much as 0.33m of earth was laid down during TS.4). A few scattered cobbles that had probably fallen from final phase construction (F.2) were found scattered over and extending 0.4-0.5m off the platform's south and north flanks.

Architectural Summary

Structures 308-1-1st and 308-4-1st are both modest constructions that stand 0.39-0.63m high, measure 4.6-7.53m across, and are oriented within five degrees of the cardinal directions. By their final phases, both were outfitted with earth-floored, stone-faced terraces 0.69-1.65m wide; Str. 308-4-1st's final version has the most ample examples (0.92-1.65m across) whereas Str. 308-1-1st's versions are much narrower (0.69-0.8m wide). The summits of both buildings share nearly identical widths, measuring 3.54-3.68m across. There were no signs of built-in constructions, such as benches, atop either building though neither platform summit was extensively cleared. Most likely, both Strs. 308-1-1st and 308-4-1st supported superstructures fashioned of perishable materials. Structure 308-1-1st's final version may have been outfitted with a low, broad stone step on its south flank, though this conjecture was not tested through excavation. In all cases, walls and facings were made of unmodified river cobbles the naturally flatter aspects of which were directed outwards. These stones were invariably set in a mud mortar.

It appears that a human burial and artifact cache were interred, possibly as dedications for the first recognized constructions associated with Strs. 308-1-1st and 308-4-1st, respectively. The relatively extensive additions made to the latter building during its TS.3 may have been initiated by the interment of another adult individual, this time placed in a specially prepared pit set off Str. 308-4-1st's north side.

Chronological Summary

Analyzed artifacts associated with Str. 308-4 point to initial occupation at the settlement during the Early Classic. The primary period of construction and use of Str. 308-4-1st apparently dates to the Late Classic. This temporal assessment conforms with the nature and quality of the edifice's architecture. As Str. 308-1-1st exhibits the same architectural features as Str. 308-4-1st, we infer that it, too, was erected during the Late Classic. Based on the available data, therefore, we surmise that Site 308 was first settled in the Early Classic, its visible constructions having been raised and in during the Late Classic.