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PSB OP 310 Excavation Report

Edward Schortman
schortma@kenyon.edu

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Site 310

Site 310 is 100m south of Site 307, 150m northeast of Site 312, and 900m north of the Quebrada Muigual. It consists of eight buildings, seven of which (Strs. 310-2/8) comprise a densely packed aggregate organized around a patio. Structure 310-1 is an isolated construction lying 22m east of this cluster. Structures 310-2 and 310-7 were excavated here from April 15-22, 1985 under the direction of Julie Benyo. Fully 13.7m² were cleared in the course of this work.

Structure 310-2

Structure 310-2, lying 9m southeast of Str. 309-7 and 5m northeast of Str. 309-6, closes off the east side of the central patio. Digging here was largely conducted within a 1m-wide trench (Subop. 310B) that extended 6m east-to-west across roughly three-quarters of the platform. Suboperation 310D was a 1x1m extension dug immediately adjacent to Subop. 310C's south side 2m west of the trench's east end. This addition was excavated to reveal S.D.2, only a portion of which was uncovered in Subop. 310B. Fully 7m² was cleared in the course of this work. Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 1.11m and 1.28m below modern ground surface outside and within construction, respectively. One major construction phase was recorded during the course of this work.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
310B/1	empty	Terminal Occupation (Secondary)	5/LCL?
310B/2	8 sherds	Terminal Occupation (Secondary)	5/LCL?
310B/3	unprocessed (small lot)	Terminal Occupation (Secondary)	5/LCL?
310B/4	39 sherds, 4 jute shells	Fill	5/ECL, LCL
310B/5	37 sherds, 38 jute shells	Fill	5/LCL, EPC?
310B/6	26 sherds, 25 jute shells, 4 bones	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	4/?
310B/7	10 sherds	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	3/ECL
310B/8	25 sherds	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	2/ECL
310B/9	6 reconstructable bowls 1 bark beater, (8 sherds, 6 jute shells, 17 bones found within the vessels)	S.D.2 (primary)	3/ECL
310B/10	8 sherds	Terminal Occupation (Secondary)	5/LCL?
310B/11	20 sherds	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	3,4/ECL?
310B/12	20 sherds, 11 jute shells	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	2/ECL
310B/13	25 sherds, 1 shell, 1 piece of	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	2/ECL

	bajareque, 1 incensario		
310D/1	unprocessed	Mix, Terminal and Occupation Debris and Fill	3, 4, 5/LCL, ECL

Time Spans

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Date
1	-	-	S.1	-	-
2	-	-	S.2	-	ECL
3	-	-	-	F.1, S.D.2	ECL
4	-	-	S.2	-	ECL?
5	Str. 310-2-1st	U.1-5	-	-	LCL, EPC?
6	-	-	S.2	F.2	-

Time Span 1

The first period of activity attested to in and around Str. 310-2-1st is the deposition of a dark brown clayey soil rich in small to medium-size rounded stones (S.1). Stratum 1 was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.09m, its base lying beyond excavation limits. Stratum 1 runs at the same level over the 4m it was exposed running east-west. The lack of cultural material within this admittedly limited exposure tentatively implies that there was no significant human presence in the area when S.1 was being deposited.

Time Span 2

An estimated 0.11m of S.2, a brown sandy-clay soil relatively free of rocks, was laid down during this interval. This earth blankets S.1 and underlays S.D.2, thereby implying that its deposition separates the two episodes associated with TS.1 and 3. Artifacts found in this portion of S.2 points to the conduct of human activities in the immediate vicinity while it was being laid down.

Time Span 3

Special Deposit 2 consists of six complete vessels and a three-quarters grooved stone bark beater laid in a rough line extending for 1.6m along an azimuth of approximately 0 degrees. The deposit is roughly 0.75m wide and may have extended beyond excavation limits as time did not permit further clearing of the area. The northern-most container (Vessel 1) was found face down as was Vessel 3 near the middle of the concentration; the rest were set with their orifices directed upwards. Vessels 2-4 are concentrated near the center of the deposit, Vessel 1 lying 0.23m to the north while Vessels 5 and 6 are 0.41m and 0.66m to the south. The bark beater is 0.21m south of Vessels 2-4. Fragments of human long bones were uncovered 0.06m southwest of Vessel 5 and 0.19m west of Vessel 2 though they and the other fragments of bone retrieved from S.D.2 do not seem to have been part of a coherent interment. The fragmentary nature of the remains, in fact, make it difficult to determine if these bones are from one or more humans. Flotation processing of the dirt found in the vessels' interiors yielded only 17 small bone pieces, 8 sherds, and 6 snail shells.

Lying 0.08m above the vessels is a discontinuous layer of very large unmodified cobbles (F.1). Feature 1 may have been introduced to cover, at least partially, S.D.2. There are few other rocks of this size located in S.2 at this depth, suggesting that F.1 was part of an intentional, if somewhat informal, construction.

Overall, activities during this period consisted of: interring a set of six ceramic vessels, one bark beater, and some bones on an earthen surface measuring 1.2m² and oriented roughly due north-south; covering this deposit with roughly 0.08m of earth identical to S.2; scattering some large river-rounded stones atop this earth and over the deposit. Aside from F.1, S.D.2 is not directly associated with any known construction.

Time Span 4

Feature 1 was blanketed by minimally 0.05m of S.2 during this interval, this being the depth of soil intervening between the aforementioned stones and the bases of TS.5 construction (U1 and 2 in particular). Whether this portion of S.2 was introduced purposefully or resulted from natural processes is uncertain.

Time Span 5

Structure 310-2-1st was a stone-faced platform fronted by a narrow terrace on the east (U.1). Unit 1 is 0.34m high and is backed by an earthen-floored terrace that projects 0.71m east of the building's core east wall (U.2). The latter extends to the same depth as U.1 and rises an estimated 0.2m above it to the summit. The summit is paved with small, river-rounded stones (U.4, 0.1m thick) and measures 2.4m across. The western edge is marked by another stone wall (U.3) the top rocks of which alone were exposed. The fill contained by U.1 and 2 is a brown soil that is identical to S.2 and is largely devoid of rocks (U.5).

Special Deposit 2 runs 0.38m beneath, and in line with, U.2, Str. 310-2-1st's core platform facing and step-up to the summit. Such a placement may be a coincidence though it seems more likely that the eastern core facing was intentionally set over the earlier deposit.

By TS. 5's conclusion, Str. 310-2-1st was a stone-faced, earth-filled platform that stood 0.54m high on the east, had a stone-paved summit that encompassed 2.4m east-west, and was aligned roughly 6 degrees. A 0.34m-high by 0.71m-wide earthen-floored terrace bounds the platform on the east. It may be that Str. 310-2-1st was purposefully set up over S.D.2, its eastern core wall overlying and running roughly parallel to the earlier deposit.

All walls were fashioned of cobbles, the flatter aspects of which were directed outwards. The stones were set in a mud mortar.

Time Span 6

Following Str. 310-2-1st's abandonment, resumed deposition of S.2 eventually covered all but the uppermost stones of TS.5 architecture ; as much as 0.32m were laid down now. A moderately dense concentration of stones likely fallen from final-phase construction (F.2) were found extending for 0.68m east of U.1 within the uppermost portions of S.2.

Structure 310-7

Structure 310-7, located 9m northwest of Str. 310-2 and 11m north of Str. 310-8, closes off the north edge of the settlement's central patio. It was investigated by means of a 1m-wide by 6m-long trench (Subop. 310C) dug into the building's south side, from the base to about three-quarters of the way across the summit. An additional 0.7m² was dug off Subop. 310C's northeast corner to facilitate exposure of S.D.1 (6.7m² cleared in all). Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 1.31m and 0.96m below modern ground surface within and outside construction, respectively. One building phase was identified in the course of this work.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
310C/1	24 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	4/LCL?
310C/2	102 sherds, 6 obsidian pieces, 50 jute shells	Fill	4/LCL?
310C/3	1 shaped stone	Burial (S.D.1)	4/LCL?
310C/4	50 sherds, 1 figurine piece	Mix, Terminal and Occupation Debris	2-4/ECL, LCL
310C/5	small lot (sherds)	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	2/ECL?
310C/6	46 sherds	Fill	4/LCL?
310C/7	46 sherds, 1 obsidian piece, 2 shells	Fill	4/LCL?
310C/8	unprocessed (sherds, 1 bivalve shell)	Fill	4/LCL?
310C/9	99 sherds, 1 jute shell	Mix, Fill and Terminal Debris	4/LCL
310C/10	150 sherds, 522 jute shells, 5 bajareque pieces	Occupation Debris (Midden?)	2/ECL, 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	-	-	S.2	-	ECL?
3	-	-	S.3	-	ECL?
4	Str. 310-7-1st	U.1-5	-	S.D.1	LCL
5	-	-	S.3	F.1	-

Time Span 1

The first activity identified in the vicinity of Str. 310-7-1st was the deposition of a dark brown clayey soil that is rich in small to large rounded stones (S.1). Stratum 1 was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.41m (its base lies beyond our excavation limits) and it yielded no cultural material. The latter observation suggests that there was no significant human presence in the vicinity when S.1 was being deposited. Stratum 1 rises very slightly from north-to-south, ascending 0.11m over 6m in this direction.

Time Span 2

Stratum 1 was blanketed by 0.33-0.42m of S.2, of a soil containing pockets of ash as well as a locally dense concentration of artifacts and shells from the snail *Pachychillus* sp. (locally known as 'jutes') along with some pieces of bajareque. Cultural materials and ash is densely concentrated in the northern portion of the trench where they underlie Str. 310-7-1st's summit, thinning out notably on the south away from later construction. Stratum 2 rises 0.06m over the 6m it was exposed running from north-to-south. A large, triangular-shaped rock, measuring 0.62x0.75m, extends through S.2's full thickness on its north-exposed portion, projecting 0.08m down into underlying S.1. This rounded stone does not seem to have been part of a purposeful construction though its behavioral significance remains uncertain.

Stratum 2 seems to contain the remains of a midden laid down prior to the erection of Str. 310-7-1st. The recovery of bajareque fragments with it suggests that this deposit was associated with perishable constructions raised somewhere nearby. Whether these were built atop platforms or set on ground surface is unknown.

Time Span 3

Covering S.2 by an estimated 0.08-0.2m is the brown soil of S.3. This is the amount of S.3 that intervenes between S.2 and architecture pertaining to Str. 310-7-1st and it is presumed that it was laid down after TS.2 but prior to TS.4. Whether this portion of S.3 was introduced by natural or cultural means is unknown.

Time Span 4

Structure 310-7-1st is a stone-faced platform fronted by two low, earthen-floored terraces on the south. The first of these, U.1, is 0.2m high by 0.74m wide. Unit 2, the next ascending riser, stands 0.26m above U.1 and runs back 1.34m back to U.3. The latter construction is estimated to have originally stood 0.12m high and provided a step-up to the summit. The latter was traced for 1.46m to the north before excavations ceased. Fully 0.54m of the summit was apparently surfaced with a ca. 0.4m-thick layer of stone (U.4); the remaining exposed portion of this area was left as earth. The fill of the terraces and core platform consists of a brown soil in which are embedded discontinuous concentrations of small to medium-size cobbles (all included in U.5).

Set at the base of the U.5 fill, directly atop S.2, at a point 1.11m north of U.3's south face is a fully articulated burial of a human adult (S.D.1). The interment is extended from the knees to skull and is aligned roughly 293 degrees. The lower legs and feet are bent back at slightly more than a right degree angle to the north; the left arm is straight but the right arm bends back towards the head, the right hand arranged under the chin. There were no grave goods included with S.D.1. The location of

this burial beneath that portion of the summit where the U.4 pavement was missing may hint at S.D.1's intrusion during or near the end of Str. 310-7-1st's occupation.

As TS.4 drew to a close, Str. 310-7-1st was a stone-faced, earth-and-stone-filled platform that rose 0.58m high on the south and was aligned approximately 102 degrees. The south flank was ascended by two low (0.2 and 0.26m high) terraces that were 0.74m and 1.34m wide (proceeding from south to north). The summit may have once been paved with stones though only a portion of this putative surface measuring 0.54m wide north-south was uncovered on the summit's south margin. Segments of the floor lying to the north may have been removed to facilitate the interment of an adult individual beneath the building's approximate center near its center-line. If this was the case, the paving stones were never replaced. All walls were fashioned of river cobbles the flatter aspects of which were oriented outwards. These stones were set in a mud mortar.

Time Span 5

After Str. 310-7-1st was abandoned, all but the uppermost stones of TS.4 architecture were covered by the deposition of S.3. This brown soil accumulated to a maximum depth of 0.35m. Embedded in S.3 and extending for 0.95m south of U.1 is a moderately dense concentration of cobbles (F.1) that almost certainly fell from terminal phase architecture.

Architectural Summary

Structures 310-2-1st and 310-7-1st are modest, stone-faced platforms that stood 0.54m and 0.58m high and were aligned 6 degrees and 102 degrees. They were both fronted on their investigated sides by stone-faced, earth-floored terraces. Structure 310-2-1st's eastern terrace was 0.34m high by 0.71m wide while the southern terraces on Str. 310-7-1st rose 0.2 and 0.26m and measured 0.74m and 1.34m across, proceeding from south-to-north, respectively. The summits of these platforms may have been paved with stones. This seems to have been the case for Str. 310-2-1st which was surfaced with a 0.1m-thick layer of small rocks across the 1m-wide swath cut over its full 2.4m width. The case is less clear for Str. 310-7-1st where only an area measuring 0.54m north-south was found covered with a 0.4m-thick layer of larger stones. As noted above, the remainder of the summit floor may have been removed to inter the individual designated as S.D.1 near the platform's center. No grave goods were found associated with this interment. All walls were fashioned using unmodified river cobbles the flatter aspects of which faced outwards. These stones were set in a mud mortar.

Structure 310-2-1st may have been set up over an earlier extensive deposit (S.D.2) of six ceramic vessels, a bark stone beater, and scattered human bones. Based on an assessment of the artifacts associated with S.D.2 and Str. 310-2-1st, it appears that a considerable period of time elapsed between laying out the vessels and raising the platform. The burial found beneath Str. 310-7-1st's summit may have been dedicatory to its construction or inserted later in the platform's use-life. The apparent disruption of the summit floor above that interment tentatively supports the latter interpretation.

Chronological Summary

Very few artifacts recovered from excavations at Site 310 were formally analyzed. Assessments made of materials recovered in the field, taken together with evaluations of exposed architecture, suggest that occupation here spanned the Early through Late Classic. No architecture was associated with the former interval though both the contents of S.D.2 found beneath Str. 310-2-1st and the

materials recovered from the midden underlying Str. 310-7-1st seem to date to the Early Classic. These items at least point to a substantial occupation of Site 310 at this time. The nature of the architecture revealed at Strs. 310-7-1st and 310-2-1st suggests that both buildings were raised during the Late Classic.