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## PSB OP 319 Excavation Report

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## Site 319

Site 319 is 950m northeast of Site 350, 500m northwest of Site 313, and 100m east of the Rio Ulua on the east bank of the Quebrada Muigual very near where the latter watercourse joins the Ulua. Most of Site 319's five buildings are organized around a central, extensive plaza open on the south and defined by Strs. 312-2-4. Structure 1 may define the east side of another plaza delimited on the west by Str. 319-2. The remaining extant construction, Str. 319-5, lies 15m northwest of the central patio and was truncated on the north by the building of a dirt access road. Structures 319-1-4 were investigated on June 3-6, 1985, these excavations being directed by Thomas Melchionne and Julie Benyo. Digging here was limited by the dense roots of orange trees that grew on and around all of Site 319's buildings in 1985. Ensuring that these trees were not damaged meant that clearing features and probing for stratigraphic deposits could only be conducted in very restricted areas. Overall, 32m<sup>2</sup> was exposed in the course of this work.

### Structure 319-1

Structure 319-1 closes off the east side of what might have been a plaza that was also bounded by Str. 319-2, 27m distant to the west. If so, this patio was open on the north and south. Digging here took the form of a 1m-wide by 7m long trench (Subop. 319B, 319E) set against and over the platform's west side, extending from its base to the summit (7m<sup>2</sup> cleared in all). Excavations were pursued to maximum depths of 0.44m and 1.42m below modern ground surface within and outside visible architecture, respectively. A single construction phase was identified for Str. 312-19 though an earlier edifice (Str. 319-Sub1) lay immediately west of that building.

### Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
319B/1	8 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3/LCL?
319B/2	10 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3/LCL?
319B/3	33 sherds	Fill	3/LCL?
319E/1	5 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3/LCL?
319E/2	27 sherds, 4 shells, 2 worked stones	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3/LCL?
319E/3	114 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3/LCL?
319E/4	60 sherds	Fill	2/ECL, LCL
319E/5	60 sherds, 2 pieces of bajareque	Fill	2/LCL?
319E/6	8 sherds	Fill	2/LCL?
319E/7	9 sherds, 6 jute shells	Fill	2/ECL, LCL
319E/8	8 sherds	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1/ECL/LCL?

319E/9	9 sherds	Terminal Occupation (Secondary)	3/ECL, LCL
319E/10	18 sherds	Fill	3/LCL?

### Time Spans

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Date
1	Str. 319-1-Sub1	U.1	-	-	ECL?
2	-	U.2	-	F.1	ECL/LCL
3	Str. 319-1-1st	U.3-5	-	-	LCL
4	-	-	S.1	F.2	

### Time Span 1

Structure 319-1-Sub1, as it was revealed at the base of Subop. 319E, was a block of stone (U.1) standing 0.46m tall, measuring at least 0.7m across (its east face alone was uncovered), and aligned roughly 23 degrees. Unit 1's architectural significance is uncertain; given its relatively great width, U.1 more likely served as a step or facing than as a foundation delimiting a surface-level edifice. Unit 1 was fashioned primarily of large cobbles the flatter aspects of which were directed outwards. These stones were set in a mud mortar.

### Time Span 2

Following Str. 319-1-Sub1's abandonment, the edifice was covered by a fill composed of an estimated 0.8m of brown soil in which a few small river-rounded rocks were included (U.2). The base and top of U.2 were not clearly demarcated; it is inferred to begin near the bottom of U.1 and to terminate where tumbled stones from Str. 319-1-1st (F.2) were found resting.

Identified in the western-most 0.4m of Subop. 319E is a dense concentration of small to large cobbles all set relatively flat (F.1). Feature 1 sits directly on U.1 and rises 0.7m above it. If these rocks comprise part of a purposeful construction, they would have projected ca. 0.2m above the top of the U.2 fill. This upper section of F.1 was relatively jumbled and did not offer a clear line when exposed in excavation. It may be, therefore, that F.1 represents: variation in the U.2 fill, some portions of the latter containing more cobbles than others; or, part of a construction that looks westward, outside our trench, and which retained the U.2 fill to the east. The F.1 stones are set in an earth matrix indistinguishable from U.2.

### Time Span 3

The western portion of Str. 319-1-1st was not well preserved. Based on our limited exposure of this section, we infer that Str. 319-1-1st was ascended by two, stone-faced risers that ascend in increments of 0.76m (U.3) and 0.26m (U.4) from west-to-east to the summit. The basal terrace (U.3) has an inferred width of 1.1m while the summit step-up (U.4) gives way to an earthen surface at least 2.9m wide (the summit's east flank was not identified). The platform's fill (U.5) consists of small to large cobbles set in a brown soil. Excavations ceased before we ascertained whether another terrace lay west

of U.3 or if that construction continued down for the estimated 0.55m needed to bring Str. 319-1-1st's west side down to the top of U.2.

Overall, Str. 319-1-1st was a stone-faced, stone-and-earth-filled platform standing an inferred 1.57m tall on the west and oriented very approximately 41 degrees. It was faced on the west by at least one terrace that is 1.1m wide and, possibly, 1.31m tall. It may be, however, that a lower terrace lay unidentified west of U.3.

All facings were made using cobbles set in a mud matrix. The flatter aspects of the outer rocks may have been directed exteriorly though the poor state of preservation enjoyed by U.3 and 4 makes it hard to determine if this was the case.

#### Time Span 4

After Str. 319-1-1st was abandoned as much as 0.7m of a brown soil (S.1) was laid down, covering all but the upper-most segments of final-phase architecture. Embedded in this layer is a moderately dense concentration of stones that likely fell from final-phase architecture (F.2). Feature 2 extends for 2.6m from U.3, dropping down and away from Str. 319-1-1st from east-to-west.

#### Structure 319-2

Structure 319-2 is 27m west of Str. 319-1 and appears to close off the east side of a plaza bordered by Strs. 319-3 and 319-4 on the north and west, respectively. Structure 319-3 is 40m to the northwest whereas Str. 319-4 is 68m to the west. The building was investigated in the course of excavations conducted in Subop. 319C, a 1m-wide by 7m-long trench dug from Str. 319-2's west side eastward to the summit (7m<sup>2</sup> cleared in total). Digging here was severely limited over the western-most 5m by tree roots, such that the nature of architecture on this flank could not be ascertained. The 2m<sup>2</sup> of the summit we cleared was largely free of this encumbrance and we were able to reach depths of 1.9m below modern ground surface here. Two construction phases were identified in the course of excavating this summit probe.

#### Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
319C/1	39 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3/LCL?
319C/2	60 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3/LCL?
319C/3	20 sherds	Fill	3/LCL?
319C/4	27 sherds	Fill	3/LCL?
319C/5	20 jute shells, 7 pieces of burnt clay, 3 worked stones	Mix, Fill and Occupation Debris	2, 3/LCL?
319C/	67 sherds, 4 pieces of burnt clay, 1 shell	Occupation Debris	2/ECL
319C/7	20 sherds	Fill	2/ECL, LCL
319C/8	22 sherds	Fill	2/ECL

319C/9	20 sherds, 3 pieces of obsidian, 9 worked stones, 6 jute shells, 1 clam shell	Fill	2/ECL, LCL
319C/10	54 sherds, 25 jute shells, 3 obsidian pieces, 1 worked stone, 3 bajareque fragments	Fill	2/LCL
319C/11	31 sherds, 12 jute shells, 5 bajareque fragments	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1/ECL, LCL
319C/12	11 sherds, 8 jute shells	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1/ECL?

### 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/LCL
2	Str. 319-2-2nd	U.1, 2	-	-	LCL/LCL
3	Str. 319-2-1st	U.3, 4	-	-	LCL
4	-	-	S.1?	-	

### Time Span 1

Because we did not ascertain the location of ancient ground surface in relation to any phase of Str. 319-2's architecture, it is very difficult to determine how much of the earth revealed in our summit probe comprises fill and how much was deposited prior to construction. This problem is especially acute as the brown soil comprising S.1 is indistinguishable from Str. 319-2-2<sup>nd</sup>'s construction fill (U.2). We, therefore, estimate that at least 0.4m of S.1 was laid down during TS.1 (this layer's base was not encountered in our excavations). The recovery of cultural material from S.1 points to a human presence in the area when this soil was being deposited.

### Time Span 2

Structure 319-2-2nd is represented here by a floor composed of a mix of stone and brown clay (U.1) underlain by an estimated 0.65m of a fill made up of brown soil in which a few small rocks are embedded (U.2). Unit 1 is 0.2m thick and showed signs of burning on its upper surface. It is unclear if this fire was intentionally lit to harden U.2's surface or resulted from activities pursued atop the platform; it may also have resulted from an accidental conflagration.

### Time Span 3

Structure 319-2-2nd's putative summit floor was covered by 0.32m of brown earth fill (U.4) that was capped by a 0.3m-thick cobble floor (U.3). The stones comprising U.3 are set in a mud mortar. There was no sign of burning on U.1's upper surface though the proximity of this construction to modern ground surface (within 0.05m) may have resulted in the erosion of any original floor treatments.

### Time Span 4

Following Str. 319-2-1st's abandonment, roughly 0.05m of a brown soil (S.1) was deposited over U.1 atop Str. 319-2-1st. There were not enough rocks embedded in this layer to warrant their designation as a feature.

Structure 319-3

Structure 319-3 closes off the north side of the settlement's main patio. It is 40m northwest of Str. 319-2 and 15m northeast of Str. 319-4. Excavation here was limited to a 1x5m trench (Subop. 319D) that runs north-south across the platform's summit (5m<sup>2</sup> cleared). Once again, the dense cover of cultivated orange trees on this building precluded clearing the building's flanks and limited investigation to a shallow exposure of the summit floor. Digging was pursued to a maximum depth of 0.43m below modern ground surface into construction fill revealing a single building episode.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
319D/1	12 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/LCL?
319D/2	7 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/LCL?
319D/3	8 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/LCL?
319D/4	4 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/EPC
319D/5	14 sherds, 1 fragment of an incense burner	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/LCL, EPC
319D/6	10 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/LCL?
319D/7	13 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/LCL?
319D/8	8 sherds, burnt clay	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/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	Str. 319-3-1st	U.1-3	-	-	LCL, EPC
2	-	-	S.1	F.1	

Time Span 1

Structure 319-3-1st's summit floor (U.1) is a pavement of stones set in a clay matrix. The recovery of burnt clay fragments from among U.1's upper stones suggests that this surface was purposefully burned. Whether this fire was designed to harden the flooring or as part of a termination rite is unknown; it could also have resulted from an accidental burning of the superstructure. Unit 2, a stone wall ca. 0.26m high and aligned roughly 295 degrees, defines U.1's north edge; the southern limit was not identified in our excavations. As it stands, 4.16m of Str. 319-3-1st's summit was exposed in Subop. 319D. The fill underlying U.1 and retained by U.2 consists of a moderately dense concentration of small to large cobbles set in a brown soil matrix (U.3).

The facing and floor exposed in Subop. 319D were built of unmodified cobbles set in an earth matrix.

### Time Span 2

As much as 0.09m of a brown soil (S.1) was laid down over Str. 319-3-1st's summit floor (U.1) following the edifice's abandonment. A few small to large cobbles, likely dislodged from final-phase architecture (F.1), were noted off U.1's margins.

### Structure 319-4

Structure 319-4 seals the west side of the site's principal plaza. Structures 319-3 and 319-2, which also delimit the plaza, are 15m northeast and 68m east of Str. 319-4, respectively. Digging here, as everywhere at Site 319, was hampered by a dense matting of roots from cultivated orange trees. Efforts to circumvent this problem were partially successful though Subop. 319-F, a 1x6m trench cut across Str. 319-4's summit heading east-west, had to be terminated early because we could not contrive to reveal much in the way of architecture. It was replaced by Subop. 319G, a 1x7m excavation that ran parallel to, and was 2.5m south of, Subop. 319F (13m<sup>2</sup> cleared on Str 319-4 overall); results here were also limited. Digging in these two trenches was pursued to a maximum depth of 0.5m into and over construction revealing a single building episode.

### Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
319F/1	32 sherds, 1 worked stone	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/LCL?
319F/2	empty	Terminal Occupation	1/LCL?
319F/3	30 sherds, 1 bone	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/LCL?
319G/1	12 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/LCL?
319G/2	59 sherds, 13 bajareque or burnt clay pieces, 2 worked stones	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/ECL, LCL
319G/3	unprocessed	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/LCL?
319G/4	8 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/LCL?
319G/5	65 sherds, 10 pieces of bajareque or burnt clay	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	1/LCL
319G/6	15 sherds, 1 piece of burnt clay or bajareque	Fill	1/LCL?

### Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	Str. 319-4-1st	U.1/3	-	-	LCL

### Time Span 1

Structure 319-4-1st's summit was covered, in part at least by a floor composed of clay set over a cobble foundation (U.2). Unit 2 is an estimated 0.12m thick and its upper surface may have been burnt. This floor is bounded on the east by a stone wall standing at least 0.25m tall (U.1) and aligned roughly 11 degrees. Unit 1 is fashioned of river-worn stones set in a mud mortar. The fill underlying U.2 is composed of a brown soil in which a very few small rocks are included (U.3).

### Time Span 2

Following Str. 319-4-1st's abandonment, as much as 0.26m of a brown soil (S.1) accumulated on the platform's summit while minimally 0.46m of this earth was deposited over the structure's east flank. A dense concentration of medium-size cobbles was found lying 0.66-1.83m east of U.1 (F.1) and likely represents tumbled architectural debris. The concentration of disrupted stones in this area hints at the presence of a terrace facing somewhere within this portion of Subop. 319G. Excavations were not pursued far enough, however, to test this proposition.

### Architectural Summary

Despite the limited amounts of architecture we were able to expose, several patterns in construction were noted. Perhaps the most salient of these was a tendency to surface platform summits with clay that was laid over a stone foundation, the upper clay being burnt in three known cases (Strs. 319-2-2nd, 319-3-1st, and 319-4-1<sup>st</sup>). Building orientations, when they could be ascertained, tended to fall within 20 degrees of each other (291-311 degrees; three of the four cases were aligned 291-295 degrees). Finally, floors and facings were invariably made of river-worn stones set in a mud mortar. We suspect that the flatter aspects of these rocks were generally oriented up- or outward, but this pattern could not be ascertained in every instance.

### Chronological Summary

Combining observations of the relatively few artifacts analyzed from these excavations with what could be discerned of the architecture suggests that Strs. 319-1-1st, 319-2-1st, 319-3-1st, and 319-4-1st were erected during the Late Classic. Material retrieved from the fill of Str. 319-5, where that platform had been cut during road construction, also points to a Late Classic date for its construction. The recovery of diagnostic Early Classic ceramic fragments from the environs of all four excavated buildings points to widespread occupation in the area during this span. It may even be that Str. 319-1-Sub1 was built now and Str. 319-2-2nd might have been erected near the Early Classic's end.