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PSB Op 327 Excavation Report

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Site 327

Site 327 consists of 10 small to modest constructions running in a rough north-south line. The settlement lies 275m north of Site 326, 300m southeast of Site 328, and 80m east of the Rio Ulua. Structures 327-6, 327-8, and 327-10 were excavated here under the direction of Julie Benyo and Thomas Melchionne. Fully 20m² was cleared in the course of this work.

Structure 327-6

Structure 327-6 is near the center of the line of buildings that comprise Site 327. Structures 327-5 and 327-7 are 2m to the north and 5m to the south, respectively. Structure 327-6 appeared on the surface as a T-shaped stone construction set flush with ground level, its 8m-long top trending northwest-southeast while its diminutive stem projected ca. 1.5m southwest from the top's approximate center. Investigation of Str. 327-6 took the form of a 1x6m trench (Subop. 327C) oriented roughly northeast-southwest and cutting perpendicular across the long arm of the feature (6m² was cleared in all). Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 0.39m and 0.53m below modern ground surface under and outside construction, respectively. One building stage was identified in the course of this work.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
327C/1	9 sherds, bajareque, lithics, obsidian	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3/EPC?
327C/2	8 sherds, obsidian	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	2/LCL?
327C/3	empty	-	-
327C/4	13 sherds, 25 obsidian pieces, 8 other lithics	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	3/EPC
327C/5	unprocessed (sherds)	Occupation Debris	2/LCL?
327C/6	empty	-	-
327C/7	unprocessed (sherds)	Terminal/Occupation Debris	3/EPC?

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date(s)</u>
1	-	-	S.1	-	-
2	-	-	S.2, 3	-	LCL?
3	Str. 327-6-1 st	U.1	-	-	EPC

Time Span 1

The earliest activity attested to in Str. 327-6's vicinity is the deposition of a reddish-brown, fine-textured clay (S.1). Stratum 1 was revealed to a maximum thickness of 0.3m (its base lies beyond excavation limits) and rises gradually from both the southwest and northeast to near the center of Subop. 327C. It ascends 0.14m over 2.6m southwest to northeast and 0.1m across 2m northeast to southwest. No cultural material was recovered from this distinctive soil, hinting at the absence of significant human activity in the immediate area when S.1 was being deposited.

Time Span 2

Stratum 2, a light brown sandy soil, blankets S.1 by 0.13-0.28m. The former layer also rises gradually from southwest to northeast, ascending 0.16m over 2.6m in this direction. Unlike S.1, however, S.2 runs more-or-less flat from that point for 3.4m to the northeast excavation margin. Stratum 3, a dark brown, root rich soil, covers S.2 by 0.07-0.17m. The former layer probably represents an upward continuation of S.2, the color of which is modified by organic material derived from modern vegetation. Cultural material recovered from S.2 and 3 points to a human presence in the area contemporary with TS.2.

Time Span 3

Projecting as much as 0.1m into S.3 and rising 0.07m above modern ground surface, U.1 is the only construction identified in Subop. 327C. Unit 1 is composed of unmodified cobbles, stands one stone (0.17m) high, measures 0.33m across, and is aligned ca. 347 degrees. The recovery of some bajareque from U.1's vicinity (in lot 327C/1) hints that this feature served as a footing for a perishable upper wall. Given the relatively insubstantial nature of U.1 it seems likely that Str. 327-6-1st was a surface-level buildings, U.1 being a foundation that bordered one of the construction's flanks. Unfortunately, no other perimeter walls were encountered in our investigations.

Structure 327-8

Structure 327-8 is a long, narrow construction trending due north-south and bounded by stone lines set flush with modern ground surface. Its northwest corner seemed, when mapped, to adjoin Str. 327-7's southeast corner whereas Str. 327-9, the southernmost building in the line, is 1m to the southwest. Excavations here took the form of a 1x6m trench (Subop. 327D) that cut across Str. 327-8 running east-west (6m² cleared in all). Digging was pursued to maximum depths of 0.46m and 0.56m below modern ground surface within and outside architecture, respectively, revealing a single construction phase.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
327D/1	1 sherd, 1 obsidian projectile point, 8 obsidian pieces	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?
327D/2	unprocessed (sherds, obsidian)	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?
327D/3	1 sherd, 1 obsidian blade	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?
327D/4	unprocessed (sherds, obsidian)	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?

327D/5	50 sherds, obsidian	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?
327D/6	9 sherds, obsidian	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?
327D/7	unprocessed (sherds)	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?
327D/8	1 sherd	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?

Time Spans

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Date(s)
1	-	-	S.1	-	-
2	Str. 327-8-1 st	U.1, 2	-	-	EPC?
3	-	-	S.2	F.1	

Time Span 1

Deposition of S.1, a reddish-brown, fine-textured clay, is the first activity identified in Str. 327-8's environs. Stratum 1 rises 0.26m over 3.2m from west to east before leveling out for the remainder of the 2.8m it is exposed within Subop. 327D. Revealed to a maximum thickness of 0.43m (its base was not found), S.1 did not yield any cultural material. Apparently, there was no significant human presence in the immediate area when S.1 was being deposited.

Time Span 2

Units 1 and 2 define the west and east margins of Str. 327-8-1st. Both are low stone walls 0.09-0.13m tall by 0.2-0.3m wide. These relatively insubstantial constructions likely served as foundations that supported perishable upper walls and bounded the earthen-floored interior of a surface-level building. The latter surface measures 1.65m across and consists of the upper portion of the S.1 clay. No room dividers or other architectural features were recorded within the cleared portion of this compartment.

By the conclusion of TS.2, Str. 327-8-1st was a surface-level edifice that measured 2.18m across its exterior (east-west), was aligned roughly 359 degrees, and contained an earthen-floored compartment that encompassed 1.65m wide in the same direction. The stone foundations that defined Str. 327-8-1st's perimeter on the east and west were 0.09-0.13m tall by 0.2-0.3m wide and were fashioned of unmodified cobbles set in a single course and held together with mud mortar.

Time Span 3

Following Str. 327-8-1st's abandonment, as much as 0.13m of a brown, sandy soil (S.2) accumulated above S.1. Stratum 2 covers all but the uppermost parts of U.1. A very few, dispersed stones that might have originally derived from U.1 and U.2 (F.1) were found between them and for 0.4m to the west of U.1 and 1.56m east of U.2. The paucity of F.1 stones suggests that U.1 and U.2 never stood much taller than they appeared during excavation.

Structure 327-10

Structure 327-10 is the most substantial construction at the site; it is the only building recorded here that seemed to be a platform. This edifice closes off the southeast flank of what may be a patio group, including Strs. 323-27-1-3, on the settlement's north edge. Structure 327-10 is 2m southwest of Str. 327-2, 3m southeast of Str. 327-3, and 6m across the possible plaza and south of Str. 327-1. Excavations here took the form of a 1x8m trench (Subop. 327B) that cut across the full width of Str. 327-10 from northeast to southwest. Digging was pursued to a maximum depth of 0.79m below modern ground surface. No clear construction units were identified in the course of this work.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
327B/1	2 sherds, obsidian	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?
327B/2	13 sherds, obsidian	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?
327B/3	1 sherd, 1 obsidian blade, chipped stone fragments	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	2/LCL, EPC?
327B/4	48 sherds, 1 obsidian projectile point, 16 obsidian pieces	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC
327B/5	29 sherds, 9 obsidian pieces	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?
327B/6	empty	-	-
327B/7	5 sherds, 4 roof tiles	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?
327B/8	empty	-	-
327B/9	sherds, obsidian, other lithics	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?
327B/10	19 sherds, obsidian	Occupation Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC?

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date(s)</u>
1	-	-	S.1	-	-
2	-	-	S.2, 3	F.1	LCL,EPC?
3	-	-	S.2, 3	-	-

Time Span 1

Deposition of a brown clay (S.1) marks the first period of activity attested to in the vicinity of Str. 327-10. Stratum 1 is at least 0.27m thick (its base lies beyond excavation limits) and slopes up ca. 0.1m over 1.2m southwest to northeast. A concentration of small to large cobbles was noted in the southwestern-most exposed segment of S.1. These stones were revealed to cover an area 0.6m southeast-northwest, are 0.23m thick, and rest immediately below the S.1/2 interface. Rocks of any sort

are quite rare in the portions of S.1 exposed in Subop. 327B, so the aforementioned cobble concentration stands out. Nonetheless, there is no evidence to suggest that these stones were purposefully placed here, especially as no artifacts were retrieved from S.1. Most probably there was no significant human presence in the immediate area when S.1 was deposited and the aforementioned rocks arrived here via natural processes.

Time Span 2

Blanketing S.1 is as much as 0.5m of a brown soil largely devoid of rocks (S.2). Not all of S.2 was likely laid down during TS.2, some it probably accumulating during TS.3. As there are no clear breaks in this stratum, however, it is impossible to say how much of S.2 pertains to each phase (the same case can be made for S.3). Embedded in S.2 near the center of Subop. 327B is a concentration of small to large cobbles (F.1) that encompass 1.3m southwest-northeast by 0.38m thick. These rocks are in no particular order though the lowest ones seem to be resting flat atop S.1. There is no indication that F.1 was part of a formal construction unit, such as a footing or facing. Immediately northeast of F.1 the soil shifts to a sandy level (S.3) that contains numerous pebbles that peter out 1.3m northeast of the rocks. Like S.2, S.3 covers S.1, collecting to maximum exposed thickness of 0.38m.

The behavioral significance of S.2, 3, and F.1 is hard to discern. On the one hand, they could have been introduced by natural processes, possibly flood action from the Rio Ulua, 92m to the west and/or the seasonal stream course 202m south of Str. 327-10. The absence of clear evidence for flooding at nearby Strs. 327-6 and 327-8 does not support this interpretation. Alternatively, S.2, 3, and F.1 may comprise the fill for a low platform that was either never faced with rocks or has had those stones removed over the years. The cultural materials retrieved from these strata and F.1 very tentatively support such a position, though they could have been introduced by natural processes. At present, all we can say is that F.1 and the artifacts found with and around it may have been parts of fill introduced in the course of raising a diminutive platform traces of which had largely vanished by 1985.

Time Span 3

As noted above, it is possible that portions of S.2 and 3 continued to be laid down after the cessation of cultural activities in this area. Given the ambiguous nature of the putative architecture and the lack of clear stratigraphic breaks in S.2 and 3, we cannot determine if this was the case and, if it was, how much of these soils were deposited in TS.3.

Architectural Summary

The two clearest constructions investigated at Site 327 (Str. 327-6-1st and 327-8-1st) were seemingly surface-level buildings delimited by modest stone footings for perishable upper walls. These foundations measured 0.09-0.17m high by 0.2-0.33m across (essentially one stone high and wide), and bounded earthen floors. The one such space that was cleared over its full width (Str. 327-8-1st) encompassed 1.65m. Structures 327-6-1st and 327-8-1st were oriented 347 and 359 degrees, respectively. Structure 327-10 may have been an earth-and-stone-filled platform though no fill-retaining walls were identified. At present, Str. 327-10's status as a cultural product remains in doubt. All surviving foundations were made of unmodified cobbles set in a mud mortar.

Chronological Summary

Very little cultural material diagnostic of any time period was recovered in our excavations at Site 327. Based on the slim data in hand, coupled with information on architectural form and size, we surmise that Site 327 was occupied primarily in the Early Postclassic with, perhaps, some settlement extending back to the end of the Late Classic.