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PSB OP 325 Excavation Report

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1Site 325

The 14 buildings comprising Site 325 occupy relatively level terrain in the southern portion of the Tencoa vega on the north bank of the Quebrada Las Vueltas. Structures 5-12 surround a patio while the remaining edifices are clustered immediately to the east and north. The Quebrada Las Vueltas is 17m west-southwest of the westernmost building, Str. 325-9, and the Rio Ulua lies to the west-northwest. Structures 6, 10, and 11 were excavated from June 9-12, 1985, ca. 24.5m² being cleared in the course of 18 person-days of labor. The investigations were directed by Colleen Siders and Marie Hamilton.

Structure 325-6

Structure 325-6 is on the southeast flank of the patio defined by Strs. 325-5 through -12, ca. 5m southwest of Str. 325-5 and 15.5m southeast and across the patio from Str. 325-11. Suboperation 325B was dug against the building's northwest (patio-facing) side, resulting in the clearing of roughly 10.8m² of prehistoric deposits. Excavations were carried down to a maximum of 0.44m below modern ground surface outside construction and 0.73m into and through architectural fill. A single building phase was recognized in the course of this work.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
325B/1	8 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC?
325B/2	5 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/EC?
325B/3	20 sherds 1 censer fragment	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC
325B/4	sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary) and Fill	2/LC, EC?
325B/5	sherds 2 censer fragments	Terminal Debris (Secondary) and Fill	2/EPC, LC?
325B/6	-	Fill	2/-
325B/7	-	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/-
325B/8	14 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC
325B/9	sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC
325B/10	empty	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/ -

325B/11	1 sherd	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/-
325B/12	7 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC?

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	Str. 325-6-2nd	U.1	-	-	LC
2	Str. 325-6-1st	U.2-5	-	-	LC, EPC
3	-	-	S.1	-	-

Time Span 1

Unit 1 is a 0.23m-high, 0.46m-wide stone wall that is oriented 57 degrees. Rocks comprising this entity range in size from 0.1x0.13m to 0.3x0.28m and are bound together with a brown mud mortar. The construction's significance is not clear. Buried by Str. 325-6-1st fill (U.4), U.1 may be a riser that originally ascended above the terrace fronted by U.2, 1.2m to the northwest. Alternatively, U.1 could be a foundation for an early version of Str. 325-6-1st's superstructure. In either case, U.1 was buried during renovation of Str. 325-6-1st.

Time Span 2

Units 2 and 3 were apparently low terraces (0.21m and 0.29m high, respectively) that fronted Str. 325-6-1st on the northwest. The rocks used in constructing these units range in size from 0.09x0.27m to 0.2x0.56m and are set in a brown mud mortar. Unit 2, the basal wall, is backed on the southeast by a fill composed of a few stones set in a dark brown soil matrix (U.5). The U.2/5 terrace is 1.58m wide and terminates in the 0.29m high ascent of U.3. An earth level comprised of light brown, fine-textured, soil containing numerous small rocks was exposed starting 0.3m back (southeast) of U.3 (U.4). Unit 4 ascends 0.58m over an exposed 1.53m northwest-to-southeast, covers U.1 by 0.1-0.4m, and continues for an undetermined distance below and southeast of that construction. This earth layer may well represent fill introduced in an effort to raise Str. 325-6-1st's summit, mantling in the process an earlier terrace facing or superstructure foundation (U.1). The absence of a stone retaining wall used to contain U.4, coupled with the paucity of tumbled debris in the vicinity, suggest that this earthen fill was never faced with rocks. Either U.4 was intended to remain exposed or, more likely, construction ceased prior to completion of the putative restoration.

Structure 325-6-1st stood, therefore, roughly 0.82m tall during its final building phase, was ascended via at least two low risers on the northwest, was oriented 56 degrees, 30 minutes, and may have been unfinished when abandoned.

Time Span 3

Stratum 2, a dark brown, coarse-textured, organic-rich soil containing many small rocks, blankets unearthed portions of Str. 325-6-1st by 0.23-0.64m. The base of this earth level was not encountered.

Structure 325-10

Structure 325-10 is on the west corner of the Str. 325-5 through -12 patio, ca. 3m west of Str. 325-11 and 8.5m northwest of Str. 325-9. This building was investigated by means of a single trench measuring 1x4.9m, running northeast-southwest, dug against the platform's northwest flank (Subop. 325D). Excavation was pursued to maximum depths of 0.79m below modern ground surface outside construction and 0.85m into and through architectural fill. A single building phase was identified during these investigations.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
325D/1	3 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC
325D/2	empty	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/ -
325D/3	sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC
325D/4	10 sherds 1 censer fragment	Preconstruction Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1/LC?
325D/5	3 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary) and Preconstruction Occupation Debris (Secondary)	1,3/LC?
325D/6	11 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC
325D/7	sherds	Fill	2/LC
325D/8	10 sherds	Preconstruction Occupation Debris (Secondary) and Fill	1,2/LC
325D/9	13 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC, EPC
325D/10	sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC
325D/11	-	Fill	2/-

325D/12 sherds Fill 2/LC

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	-	LC?
2	Str. 325-10-1stU.1,2	-	-	-	LC, EPC
3	-	-	S.2	F.1	-

Time Span 1

Stratum 1, a red-brown clay containing relatively few rocks, underlies U.1 and 2. This level rises towards the center of its exposed extent, ascending 0.18m over 3.4m southwest-to-northeast and 0.14m over 1.5m from northeast-to-southwest. Stratum 1 was uncovered to a maximum thickness of 0.38m, though its base was not encountered. Recovery of artifacts from this layer indicates that there was a human occupation in the immediate environs of Str. 325-10-1st prior to that building's erection.

Time Span 2

Unit 1, Str. 325-10-1st's northeast basal facing, stands 0.25m above S.1, is set 0.04-0.06m into that level, and measures 0.54m across. The rocks comprising U.1 measure 0.1x0.14m to 0.21x0.44m and are set in a brown mud mortar. Backing U.1 to the southwest is a fill composed of stones set in a brown soil (U.2). Unit 2 overrides S.1, though its top is not easily distinguished from the soil level mantling Str. 325-10-1st (S.2) during TS.3. No formal pavement capped U.2, indicating that the platform's summit was likely floored with earth.

Structure 325-10-1st, therefore, is a 0.25m-high construction ascended via a single riser on the northeast, topped with an earth floor, and aligned roughly 56 degrees.

Time Span 3

The dark brown, coarse-textured, organic-rich soil of S.2 buries S.1 by 0.29-0.4m and covers exposed portions of Str. 325-10-1st by 0.29-0.44m. Embedded in S.2 is a moderately dense scatter of stones all of which most likely fell from final-phase architecture (F.1). Feature 1 extends up to 0.76m northeast of U.1.

Structure 325-11

Structure 325-11 is on the northwest side of the Str. 325-5 through -12 patio,

approximately 15.5m northwest of Str. 325-6 and 3m east of Str. 325-10. Approximately 8.8m² was excavated in Subop. 325C on the building's southeast (patio-facing) flank, digging being carried down to maximum depths of 0.91m below modern ground surface outside construction and 1.1m into and through architectural fill. A single building phase was recognized in the course of this work.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/Date</u>
325C/1 and 2	16 sherds 2 <u>bajareque</u> fragments	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC, EPC
325C/3	-	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/-
325C/4	-	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/-
325C/5	-	Preconstruction	1/-
325C/6	28 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC
325C/7	13 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC, LC
325C/8	9 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC?
325C/9	31 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC, EC
325C/10	11 sherds	Fill	2/LC, EC
325C/11	25 sherds	Fill	2/LC
325C/12	57 sherds	Fill	2/LC
325C/13	42 sherds	Fill	2/LC
325C/14	10 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC, EPC
325C/15	19 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC
325C/16	30 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC

325C/17	19 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC
325C/18	13 sherds	Fill	2/LC, EC
325C/19	empty	Terminal Debris (Secondary) and Preconstruction	1,2/ -
325C/20	6 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC

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	-	EC?
2	Str. 325-11-1st U.1,2	-	-	-	LC, EPC
3	-	-	S.2	F.1	-

Time Span 1

Stratum 1, a light brown, coarse-textured soil incorporating numerous small rocks, underlies exposed Str. 325-11-1st construction. This level was revealed in two discontinuous segments, ascending 0.63m over 4.46m southeast to northwest. Stratum 1 was uncovered to a maximum thickness of 0.5m, though its base lies beyond the limits of Subop. 325C. Field observations of artifacts coming from S.1 imply that there was human occupation in the vicinity of Str. 325-11-1st prior to raising that platform in TS 2.

Time Span 2

Unit 1, the apparent southeast basal facing, is a massive stone wall rising 0.75m above S.1 on the southeast and measuring 1.8m across, northwest-southeast. The northwest face is nearly sheer, while on the southeast U.1 ascends in four increments of 0.19m, 0.12m, 0.17m, and 0.24m from bottom to top. The “treads” backing these risers are 0.24-0.59m wide and may comprise a series of steps by means of which the summit was attained. The U.1 stones measure 0.02x0.1m to 0.26x0.5m (most fall towards the middle of this continuum) and are set in a brown mud mortar. The flatter aspects of the rocks comprising U.1 are oriented outwards. Backing U.1 on the northwest is a fill of dark brown soil (U.2) that overlies by 0.23-0.65m the southeast-northwest upward slope of S.1. There is no sign of a stone pavement capping U.2. We are not certain that we exposed the platform’s summit; if so, then the superstructure had an earthen floor.

Structure 325-11-1st, therefore, rose at least 0.8m on the southeast, was ascended via 4 low steps on that flank, and was aligned roughly 68 degrees.

Time Span 3

Stratum 2, a dark brown, organic-rich soil containing many small rocks, overlies S.1 by 0.54-0.6m and obscures most of U.1. Feature 1 is a light scattering of stones in the northwest portion of Subop. 325C, lying atop U.2. These rocks apparently fell from final-phase architecture.

Chronological Summary

Occupation at Site 325 spans the Early Classic through Early Postclassic, with the most intense period of use and construction concentrated in the Late Classic. Evidence for Early Classic habitation is found in the vicinity of Strs. 325-6-1st and 325-11-1st, while diagnostics of Early Postclassic occupation were recovered from all three investigated edifices. No construction could be unambiguously assigned to the Early Classic and Early Postclassic. Structures 325-6-1st, 325-10-1st, and 325-11-1st were all apparently raised during the Late Classic and continued to support occupation during the succeeding Early Postclassic. One exception may be represented by Str. 325-6-1st's U.4. If this earthen fill was deposited as part of an unfinished renovation, it may date to the Early Postclassic, the last period of occupation at the building. Such a temporal attribution, while possible, is far from clear. No signs of earlier or later settlement at Site 325 were found.

Architectural Summary

All three investigated Site 325 buildings are platforms the cores of which consist of earth and/or earth-and-stone fill faced by low stone retaining walls. The latter stand 0.21-0.75m high, are 0.46-1.8m wide, and are fashioned of unmodified stones measuring 0.02x0.1m up to 0.26x0.5m. A brown mud mortar was used as a binding agent in all of the observed instances. The buildings examined in 1985 stood 0.25-0.82m high overall, ascended by a single, 0.25m-high, facing (Str. 325-10-1st); at least one, 1.58m-wide, terrace on the northwest (Str. 325-6-1st); and four low (0.12-0.23m high by 0.26-0.59m wide) steps that may have provided access to Str. 325-11-1st's summit. Unearthed segments of summit floors were invariably earthen and our limited excavations did not reveal any built-in superstructure architecture, such as benches and shelves. Structures 325-6-1st and 325-10-1st have very similar alignments, ca. 56 degrees, 30 minutes and 56 degrees respectively; Str. 325-11-1st diverges from this pattern, being oriented approximately 68 degrees.