

1984

PSB Op 31 Excavation Report

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Site 31

Site 31 contains 15 structures and one feature, most of which (Strs. 31-1/10, Feat. 1) form a tightly nucleated patio group occupying a low rise above the Las Huertas/Hondo high terrace. Structures 31-11/15 are scattered in a rough line extending southeast from the patio cluster. The settlement lies on the north margin of the high terrace, overlooking a steep, approximately 20m, descent to the Rio Las Huertas floodplain. This perennial stream is ca. 225m to the north, while Sites 30 and 27 occupy the same terrace margin as Site 31, roughly 400m to the east and 150m to the northwest respectively. A deep, east-west trending seasonal stream channel lies approximately 200m south of Site 31, separating the settlement from Sites 33-34 in this direction. Excavations were carried out at Site 31 from June 11-12, 1984, being terminated precipitously when we lost permission to continue the work. The 8.1m² excavated during 16 person-days of work, therefore, yielded material suitable for dating final-phase occupation but only one possible architectural unit was revealed. Consequently, results are summarized for the site as a whole and not by individual structures. The four excavations initiated here include: Subop. 31B, on the east side of Str. 31-7; Subop. 31C, on Str. 31-1's north flank; Subop. 31D, situated southwest of Str. 31-5; and Subop. 31E, on the south side of Str. 31-6. Digging was pursued to a maximum depth of 0.58m below modern ground surface.

Excavation Lots

<u>Lot</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Time Span/ Date</u>
31B/1	92 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/EPC
31B/2	221 sherds 2 andesite pieces	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC
31B/3	234 sherds 2 chert pieces 4 <u>jute</u> shells 2 bone fragments	Possible Midden	1,2/LC
31B/4	18 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC
31B/5	60 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC

31B/6	76 sherds	Possible Midden	1,2/LC
31B/7	106 sherds 4 <u>bajareque</u> fragments 3 <u>jute</u> shells 1 bone fragment	Terminal Debris (Secondary) and Possible Midden	1,2/LC, EPC
31C/1	99 sherds 1 obsidian piece 1 andesite piece 5 <u>bajareque</u> fragments	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC, EPC
31C/2	138 sherds 2 lithics 13 <u>jute</u> shells	Terminal Debris (Secondary) and Possible Midden	1,2/LC, EPC
31C/3	7 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC, EPC
31C/4	65 sherds 2 figurine fragments 2 obsidian pieces 10 <u>jute</u> shells	Terminal Debris (Secondary) and Possible Midden	1,2/LC
31C/5	2 sherds	Backdirt	N.A./ ?
31D/1	15 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC, EPC

31D/2	206 sherds 1 obsidian piece 2 chert pieces 29 <u>jute</u> shells 4 bone fragments	Possible Midden	2/LC, EPC
31D/3	34 sherds 2 <u>jute</u> shells 1 bone fragment	Possible Midden	2/LC
31D/4	13 sherds 1 <u>jute</u> shell	Possible Midden	1/LC
31D/5	3 sherds	Possible Midden	1/LC?
31D/6	29 sherds 3 obsidian pieces 1 <u>bajareque</u> fragment 3 <u>jute</u> shells	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC, EPC
31E/1	58 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC
31E/2	75 sherds	Terminal Debris (Secondary)	2/LC, EPC
31E/3	197 sherds 3 censer fragments 3 obsidian pieces 1 chert piece	Terminal Debris (Secondary) and Possible Midden	2/LC, EPC

	1 mano fragment 3 <u>jute</u> shells 1 bone fragment		
31E/4	117 sherds 15 <u>bajareque</u> fragments 1 chert piece 3 bone fragments	Possible Midden	2/LC
31E/5	58 sherds 2 chert pieces 7 <u>jute</u> shells 2 bone fragments	Possible Midden	2/LC
31E/6	95 sherds 2 <u>candelero</u> fragments 1 obsidian piece 1 burnt clay fragment 2 <u>jute</u> shells 3 bone fragments	Possible Midden	1/LC
31E/7	27 sherds 1 obsidian piece 2 <u>bajareque</u> fragments 1 <u>jute</u> shell 2 bone fragments	Possible Midden	1/LC
31E/8	16 sherds	Backdirt	N.A./LC

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	-	S.1	-	LC
2	U.1	S.2	-	LC, EPC
3	-	S.3	F.1	-

Time Span 1

The earliest activity attested to in the Site 31 excavations is the deposition of S.1, a red-brown clay containing numerous small stones along with carbon flecks, artifacts, and organic material, including jute (Pachychilus) shells and animal bone. This level was exposed to a maximum thickness of 0.26m, in Subop. 31D, though nowhere was its base uncovered. Stratum 1 is the basal soil level identified in each of the four excavations and appears to incorporate significant amounts of trash. The consistency with which S.1 was located in different parts of the settlement suggests that, either Site 31 was raised over an extensive midden or occupants of each nearby building were jettisoning roughly equivalent amounts of detritus over a prolonged interval. Middens are rarely identified in middle Ulua excavations, making the S.1 trash level a relatively unusual feature within the known regional context.

Time Span 2

Stratum 2, a brown soil containing some rocks, overlies S.1 by 0.07-0.22m. The large quantities of artifacts and organic debris (jute shells and animal bone) recovered from this level imply that it, too, represents a midden deposit. The break between S.1 and 2 is not stark and it may be that both are parts of the same trash unit, color variations resulting from post-depositional weathering processes. Strata 1 and 2 include, almost exclusively, Late Classic artifacts. This relative uniformity in temporal diagnostics supports attribution of both strata to the same protracted interval of trash deposition. For the time being, however, the temporal distinction between S.1 and 2 is maintained and each is assigned to a distinct time span.

Unit 1 is a 0.27m high stone wall that probably served as the eastern basal facing of Str. 31-7-1st. This construction rests ca. 0.02m above S.1 and is largely buried by S.2 and 3. A moderately dense concentration of stones, probably fallen from U.1, is embedded in S.2 and extends 0.41m east of that architectural element (F.1). The latter was probably laid down during TS.3, following Str. 31-7-1st's abandonment. Unfortunately, recording of U.1 was prematurely ended due to the unexpected truncation of investigations.

Time Span 3

The final period of activity recognized in Site 31 excavations is the laying down of S.3, a dark brown, root-rich soil that buries S.2 by 0.1-0.29m. The artifacts recovered in this level were likely redeposited by natural processes from nearby buildings following the site's abandonment.

Chronological Summary

Site 31 apparently sustained a considerable Late Classic occupation. The Stratum 1/2 midden was laid down over this interval and the relatively large quantities of artifacts and associated materials recovered even from limited excavations hint at a substantial population for the settlement at this time. We argue, based on the likely association of these objects with final-phase occupation of the site, that nearby Strs. 31-1 and 31-5/7 were raised and used primarily in the Late Classic, occupation continuing into the subsequent Early Postclassic. Site 31's tightly nucleated, patio-focused plan is reminiscent of structure arrangements dated to the Late Classic elsewhere in central Santa Barbara and supports the chronological placement argued above. It is also probable, given the shallowness of the Stratum 1/2 midden (no more than 0.29m below current ground surface), that this trash deposit was also associated with the final occupation of Strs. 31-1, 31-5/7. Unfortunately, this linkage was not directly confirmed through excavation. There is no evidence of habitation pre-and postdating the Late Classic and Early Postclassic. Deeper as well as more extensive excavations would have to be carried out before the full occupational history of the site could be ascertained, however.