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EPV 001 Bell Field Notes 2008

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FIELD NOTES

ELLEN E. BELL

PAREP

June 15-July 7, 2008

Wednesday, June 4, 2008

I arrived in San Pedro Sula on the Continental flight today to do brief stints in both Copan and El Paraíso. I'll be in Copan from June 5 – June 15 and in El Paraíso from June 15 – July 4. I fly back to California on Monday, July 7.

Jorge Bueso, ever reliable, picked me up at the airport along with Aelega Schortman, who is in Honduras to find a site to do field work for her Ph.D. in cultural anthropology at the University of Kentucky. She is interested in examining the transition from subsistence agriculture to wage labor and purchasing all/almost all food for daily consumption. Hard to believe she's already at that point! In a side note, Pat and Ed were back in Gambier at the end of May for Hayden's graduation from Kenyon. He graduated with Honors (not sure which level) and Distinction on his comps in Sociology. Hard to believe how fast time flies!

After checking into the Gran Hotel Sula, I went out to Pueblo Nuevo to see Pat and Ed (they were doing well). On the way, we stopped to open new bank accounts at the Banco de Occidente in Cofradia since Pat and Ed are using the accounts from last year and 2006. I then returned to San Pedro Sula in the green truck (seems to be in pretty good shape) to pick up Loa and Katie Miller (bioarchaeology Ph.D. student at Arizona here to take samples for her work, Jane's work, and Doug Price's work). Both arrived safe and sound (and even with all of their luggage!).

We spent the night at the Sula with plans to head out to Copan on Thursday.

Thursday, June 5 – Friday, June 13, 2008

Working in Copan with Loa Traxler on ECAP artifact housings. See Bell ECAP Field Notes 2008 for details.

Saturday, June 14, 2008

Catalina López, Stefanie Griffin, and Mary Hostenske arrived with Jorge Bueso, Milton Grajeva, and Julian yesterday afternoon. We got them settled in the Copan Plaza Hotel, went out to dinner, and then let them get some well-deserved rest (they had an overnight flight out of Oakland and were exhausted).

Today we'll tour around the site of Copan. I'm hoping we can see the site, the sculpture museum, the town museum, and the children's museum, but that may be too much to get to in one day. If need be, we can do the town museum and/or children's museum tomorrow morning before leaving for El Paraíso.

We also need to do some banking today. Marcello is bringing a check with the Yale funds he is contributing to the project, so Jorge will advance enough from Pat and Ed's account to cover the check and then deposit the check in Pat and Ed's account. I'll also do some quick calculations with him to see how much we should take out to cover the first week's expenses.

Sunday, June 15, 2008

Today we saw both the Sculpture Museum and the Town Museum. Marcello wasn't able to get to Copan, so we're staying an extra night at the MarJenny Hotel and planning to leave tomorrow.

Monday, June 16, 2008

Mary and I did shopping in the morning and got everything ready so we could leave for El Paraíso as soon as Marcello arrived. Santiago picked him up at the border at about 12:30pm, we had lunch with Loa at the Café Welchez and then headed out. When we stopped at El Jaral for ice, I was amazed to see that they actually have 2 ostriches—didn't expect to see that on the way out to EP!

We arrived in El Paraíso at about 6:30pm and, after looking at space in the house, decided that it would be better to get a second house. Chepe knew of a few that might be available, but, in the end, we put Mary, Stefanie, and Catalina in the brand new hotel, which has air conditioning, cable tv, and hot showers—it's really quite something. They were able to give us a 10% discount and the students will eat breakfast there and keep a running tab.

We had dinner at the hotel cafeteria and then headed back over to the house to get things unpacked. Everyone is slated to come over to get things organized and ready for the field at 9am tomorrow morning.

Tuesday, June 17, 2008

We started off the day getting the house, laboratory, and stored artifacts in order. Since the roof of the house had been changed during the off-season there were a lot of debris on the boxes. We cleaned them off, re-organized, and got the computer set up.

We then went out to see the sites. All looks good and there have been a number of changes since last season:

1. the coffee finca that covered the western group of Los Naranjitos has been cut so it is now possible to see all of the structures.
2. most of the guayaba trees have been cut at El Guayabal, so it is now possible to see many of the smaller structures

At this point, it looks like it would be a good idea to get something done at that group before the coffee gets higher, but I also want to make sure that Mary gets what she needs for in order to pull together her proposal before trying for an NSF dissertation improvement grant.

Wednesday, June 18, 2008

We spent the morning going over paperwork procedures, putting field kits together, and generally preparing for fieldwork.

Marcello got the edited files from the Yale server transferred to the desktop. In the process, he found a number of files (about 60 gigs) that seem to have been orphaned/duplicated. These were put into an uber-temp file and he'll spend time tomorrow going through them to see what they are, if they are duplicated in the proper archive, and then deleting those that can be deleted.

We also spent some time going over budgets and accounts. The salaries have gone up sharply with the rise in oil prices world-wide, so we'll pay the equivalent of L.960/week, calculated as L.160 per day, with a small (L.100-200) tip at the end of the 3 week period. Mary Hostenske is also contributing \$600 from her field funds toward worker salaries, since the focus of the work this year will be excavations that will feed directly into her dissertation work. She is also contributing \$300 toward the subsistence budget.

Santiago's compensation will be a little unorthodox. His salary is L.3,000/week, which would be L.9,000, plus a tip/thank you gift at the end. He is in the process of working toward putting in a small store at his house and needs a refrigerator. The one he wants to buy goes for about L.12,000. Our project refrigerator is on the blink. So, he offered to lend us the fridge if we would put his salary toward it in a lump sum, with the plan to pay off the rest on credit. Santiago has been such an integral part of the project, helping during the off-season and whenever we need him, that we've decided to just buy the whole thing for him, since we'll use it while we're here. We should be able to get it and bring it back to EP on Friday.

Speaking of Friday, Marcello has to be in Guatemala on Sunday, so he'll catch a ride out to the border with Santiago on Friday afternoon when Santiago goes home for the weekend. I'll ride in to La Entrada with them, go to the bank, and then catch a ride back to EP with Jorge and Milton, who are coming out to EP that afternoon. Marcello and Santiago can get the fridge then so we can bring it back to EP that afternoon.

Santiago, Mary, and I went out to secure permission from the landowners this afternoon. Since we'll be working at Los Naranjitos (S-7) this year, we did not need to negotiate with Doña Ruperta, but I stopped in to see her and say hello just the same. She seemed to be doing quite well. We did need permission from Don Luis ***** and his brother, Ernesto Hernandez, who own the chunks of land with Site 7, Str. 10-15 and Str. 12, respectively. We found Don Luis at the veterinary store in the center of town, and Don Ernesto out cleaning his milpa. Both kindly granted permission.

We then went out to the site to shoot in stations so they would be ready for work tomorrow. We started the stations with S600 (a new hundred for a new year) and (starting from D00) shot in S600 on top of El Cafetal Str. 8, S601 and S602 east of and on top of S-07 Str. 12, respectively, and S603 on the N end of S-07 Str. 10. All is set to lay out pits tomorrow.

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Laid out pits this morning and started half of the guys in on excavation. Santiago and I also re-mapped the structures on the eastern side of S-007 since they are now visible with the finca having been cut down.

Friday, June 20, 2008

Spent the morning and early afternoon on-site with Mary, Stefanie, and Catalina, where we noticed that there seem to be two different numbering systems for the structures in the western part of S-007: one assigned on the computer and another established when I was poking around in what was high coffee in 2005. I'll check the database to see if the structures were numbered

in the field during the initial survey. If they were, we'll go with that system; if not, the 2005 numbers take precedence since they were published in Mary's Honors Thesis. (**Note: I checked the database on 23 June 2008, and it turns out that the 2005 numbers match the structure numbers assigned during mapping in 2002, so we'll go with those and change the numbering on the CAD map--EEB**)

Santiago, Marcello, Chepe, and I left for La Entrada at about 2:30pm to get to the bank and do the shopping. Unfortunately, it turns out that no dollar account transactions can be done after 3pm, so I was only able to take out the funds left in the Lempira account. I'll need to get back into La Entrada to get additional funds next week.

Marcello is in Antigua for the weekend.

Saturday, June 21, 2008

Excavations continued today, with Mary, Stefanie, and Catalina out on-site and me in the lab working on points. The work is progressing well, with a lot of bajareque coming out in Op. 10/14 along with a large greenstone axe. In Op. 10/15, Catalina found the basal wall—oriented to N rather than the other structures. There is also a concentration of rocks located south and slightly below the remains of an apron floor south of Str. 13.

Mary also laid out excavations on the westernmost structure in the group, as well as a test pit in the center of the plaza. I'll encourage her to lay out additional units on the north side of the plaza as time permits. Ideally, we'd like to be done with the test excavations in this group by the end of the week (when Catalina and Stefanie head home), and then move over to Str. 12 and some of the small buildings in S-009 on Chema Hernandez's land.

Sunday, June 22, 2008

Everyone took it easy this morning and then came over to the lab house to wash sherds. I wanted Stefanie and Catalina to experience the process, and we all wanted to see what was coming out in the screens. So far, it's looking to be quite interesting, with some Copador, Raul, Casaca, and, most impressively, a large greenstone axe fragment.

Monday, June 23, 2008

We got off to a good start this morning by getting the lab re-organized and ready for work. With Feliberto and Paco's help, we re-built the shelves, put up the lab table, stacked the unused boards against the wall, got the bed, mattresses, and wheelbarrow into the spare room. I am now set up for artifact analysis, which I'm beginning this morning. I should be able to put together a small photo stand on the table off to the side using the artifact boxes as a stand for the photo cloth, etc. I'll use the modified PVN/PVC catalog sheets for most of the artifacts and then take notes/add a db for other things like jute, bajareque, etc. My goal for the season is to have catalogued (or at least looked at) all of the non-pottery artifacts by the end of the season, and to make sure that we have a good photographic (and, as possible and warranted) drawing record of all of the objects. To do this, I'll need to have gotten the 2002-2007 backlog done by the end of the week so I can analyze this year's material after it's washed.

2008-01-5

As far as scheduling / planning goes, right now, we're planning to run 5 crews through the end of next week, with Stefanie and Catalina supervising 2 this week, and all going to Mary next week. I'd like to see them finish testing most of the structures in the west plaza of S-007 (Los Naranjitos) this week while Stefanie and Catalina are still here, with Mary moving over to S-007 Str. 12 and S-009 for the first part of next week. At this point, I think I'll plan to stay here in EP with Mary through Sunday morning so we can have Friday and Saturday to finish if need be.

Op. 10/15: In the field, when I left them this morning, Catalina and Mary were preparing to draw the cobble pavement south of the south façade of Str. 13 prior to cutting it to see if the wall continues down to an earlier floor. At this point, it looks like it does, but it will be good to confirm, and to see how the wall relates to the concentration of stones south and below the level of the cobble floor.

Op. 10/14 Stefanie (with Leonel substituting for Chepe, who is out sick with a nasty fever) is continuing to look for the north wall of Str. 13. This excavation has yielded some very nice Copan pottery and the greenstone axe fragment. Str. 13 lies behind (south) of Str. 11 and may have served as some sort of food preparation area (Catalina found a large metate fragment in Op. 10/15, on the opposite (south) side of the building) or staging area for activities carried out on and around the large structures in the group. A potsmash (very, very poorly preserved—the pottery is so wet that it is almost mush) was found below a line of rocks that seems to be located below a level of clay that rests below the level of the majority of the tumble. There is a good chance (especially with what we've seen on the south side of the building), that there were multiple phases of construction, with the lower levels having been extended by the upper. Given the location and extent of the deposit of very decomposed pottery, along with its bright orange color, it is also *possible* that the fragments represent a very poorly preserved floor level. Stefanie will check this tomorrow by taking off the tumble in EU-B off in three levels: the upper rock, the clay, and then the lower rocks to uncover the pottery below.

Op. 10/16 Mary finished this unit on Str. 7 yesterday afternoon and is now doing the drawings

Op. 10/17 2x1 m test excavation on the front (E) side of Str. 10; 2 steps visible; lots of artifacts

Op. 10/18: 2x1 m test excavation on the back (W) side of Str. 10

Op. 10/19: 2x1m test excavation in the center of the west group plaza

Op. 10/20: 2x1 m test excavation on the front (S) side of Str. 8

Tuesday, June 24, 2008

Marcello and Santiago arrived back last night after a somewhat difficult trip: Marcello was stuck on the highway in Guatemala for a couple of hours when the highway was closed due to a bad factory explosion, and then there were fears that they wouldn't make it past Copan Ruinas since the Chorti have occupied the site to protest the fact that they haven't been given lands promised by former President Callejas. In the end, though, they did make it through.

Excavations continued today with Sub-Ops. 10/14, 17, 18, 19, and 20 in operation. Santiago and Marcello surveyed south of S-007, and I worked with the figurines in the lab. We also took a look at the map, changed the structure numbers, and decided that what was labeled S-009 really is a northern extension of S-007, and that it makes sense to group those structures within S-007 and to make S-009 the group of two low structures to the west of this settlement.

Catalina, Stefanie, and I tried out the aerobics class at their hotel (it was good, although I think I may have screwed up my knee) and there was a huge rainstorm.

Wednesday, June 25, 2008

I took the students out to the site this morning, and it looks like the pits did get a little wet overnight, so we'll put up tarps (the old ones) and hope that they aren't stolen.

Op. 10/14: Still working to find the north wall, but getting a lot of pottery. I think that there is a good chance that there are at least two construction phases. The lowest level is a dense, yellow clay with an artifact-rich darker level with two flat rocks in it that may be an earlier version. This organic and artifact-rich level is capped by a thick level (approx. 30 cm) of what appears to be clean clay. The clay is topped by a rich, dark brown level that includes the majority of tumble and additional pottery. The north wall of the final version is either very close to the center line of the mound (unlikely) or it wasn't preserved.

Op. 10/17: This unit, on the E (front) side of Str. 10 has uncovered a one-stone thick apron floor. The floor ends at a fill change, but there don't seem to be any façade stones left in place, so the excavation has continued into the fill of the structure.

Op. 10/18: On the west side of Str. 10, the excavation also appears to be in fill. There may be a very low (3 stone) terrace in EU-A that leads to a fill body in EU-B. Again, the façade stones seem to be gone.

Op. 10/19: The test pit in the plaza is continuing to sterile. Right now, there are 2 clear levels; a dark brown level on top, and a light yellow level below, with a merging level between.

Op. 10/20: The unit on the front (N) side of Str. 9 has revealed 3 steps and a cobble apron floor..

Thursday, June 26, 2008

I spent the morning in La Entrada at the bank and doing the shopping. We then went through the El Paraiso Str 1 drawings to make sure that the steps on the east side resolve properly. We were able to find that last year's excavations on the north coincided well with excavations on the south, but there is an anomalous patch of very well-organized, well-laid fill between the two (and all steps above the first 6 are missing). So, the plan is for Marcello and Santiago to start in on a vertical probe from the top of the eastern edge of the structure along the center line to see if it's possible to understand this discrepancy. I think there might be a chance that the fill unit seals a deposit of some sort.

Mary, Catalina, and Stefanie continue well at Los Naranjitos.

Friday, June 27, 2008

Stefanie, Catalina, and Mary continue at Los Naranjitos. At this point, the group is starting to shape up nicely. It looks like the buildings in the core (Str. 9, 10, 11, plus, possibly, Str. 7) all face in toward the central plaza, but that the structures along the edges (Str. 13, 8) face out: Str. 13 faces south; Str. 8 faces north (to work with Str. 2 and Str. 12, perhaps).

Str. 13: Stefanie finished this excavation on the south side of Str. 13 (Op. 10/14) by finding the back wall of the building. It was very well constructed and appears to be oriented almost directly E-W, as is the north (front) wall. This is a little different from the orientation that we expected based on the surface remains. It is also interesting the he building faces south, away from Str.11 into apparently open space as there are no other surface-visible structures in this area. Santiago walked the entire cut coffee field on the first day out, and didn't find any other buildings in it.

Catalina exposed the south (front) side of the structure in Op. 10/15. The south side of the building includes a first terrace composed of a low (2 course) wall that is abutted by an apron cobble floor which extended approximately 1.5 m south of the terrace wall. We initially thought that the floor was a later addition because the rocks of the wall appeared to continue beneath it, but, upon sectioning the floor, it was found that the wall was only countersunk by approximately 10-20 cm, suggesting that the floor had been built at the same time as the wall. There is a concentration of rock farther south of and below the level of the floor, which might suggest the presence of an additional construction, but it was not possible in the time allotted to test this concentration.

As for additions; both the concentration of cobbles south of the south (front) terrace wall, and the concentration of flat-laid cobble fill that extends at the level of the top of the north (back) wall for approximately 2.5 m. The north edge of this very poorly built possible extension may have been formed by a low terrace wall that was completely destroyed but may be visible in section.

Str. 7 This building, investigated by Mary through Op. 10/16, proved to be a very low structure with a west wall formed by a single line of stones. The wall faced an earthen and rock fill that formed the hearting for a low substructure. While not definitive, the building appears to have faced west toward Str. 13.

Str. 10: This building, investigated by Mary in Op. 17 (east/front side) and Op. 18 (west/back side) appears to have been rather poorly preserved. It forms the west side of S-007 and is relatively large (1.5-2m) and may have experienced significant collapse. The front (east) side includes traces of a low front terrace abutted by a slightly irregular cobble surface. The rear (west) side may have included a poorly preserved, low cobble terrace, and its original back wall appears to have been poorly preserved as well. The fill that forms the hearting of the structure, however, is compactly laid.

Str. 9; This building, investigated by Mary in Op. 20 (south/front side) and Op. 21 (north/back side) turned out to be a delightfully well preserved structure. The south (front) side includes

three well built steps that lead to a small terrace and a summit wall made of a single line of large, rounded stones. The lowest step is abutted by a cobble apron floor that extends slightly more than 1 m south of the façade of the first (lowest) step. The north (back) side is formed by a 5 course cobble wall. There does not appear to have been a formalized surface to the north of the structure, although the terminal debris included a large number of small cobbles that appear to have fallen onto the approximate level of the living surface.

Str. 8: This building is being investigated by Mary in Op. 10/22. on the south (back?).

Plaza: The center of the plaza was investigated by Catalina in Op. 10/19. The cultural levels (2 easily visible) gave way to sterile, water-laid gravel at about 1.70 m below ground surface. The fact that the gravels are so deep (especially compared with those found very close to the surface on the east side of S-002, continues to support the suggestion that the river has moved farther from the site over time and that sedimentation pattern moved from deep, heavy sedimentation to the west and lighter deposits farther south.

El Paraíso Str. 1

Marcello started Op. 5/16 today. The goal of the sub-op is to understand why the stairs of both Blanco I and Blanco II appear on both the north and the south (we think) ends of Str. 1 but do not appear to be present on the center of the structure. There are a few possible scenarios:

1. the stairs are there, but we didn't see them in earlier excavations
2. there are actually 2 buildings under Str. 1, so the it was unified into a single structure only in the final construction phase (this would mean buildings on both the north and south ends had nearly identical stairs.
3. there was one building, but the central portion of the stairs was ripped out for some reason—possibly to put in a ritual deposit of some sort—and then the area was packed with well organized, flat laid fill.

So far, we've hit the compact fill, the old excavation unit (Op. 05/02), and a soil change. With the exception of a few fragments of toba, not a single artifact has been found.

July 4, 2008

Finishing up; scanning; data transfer, etc. The power went out, but it's back now, so we're continuing and will plan to leave town tomorrow.