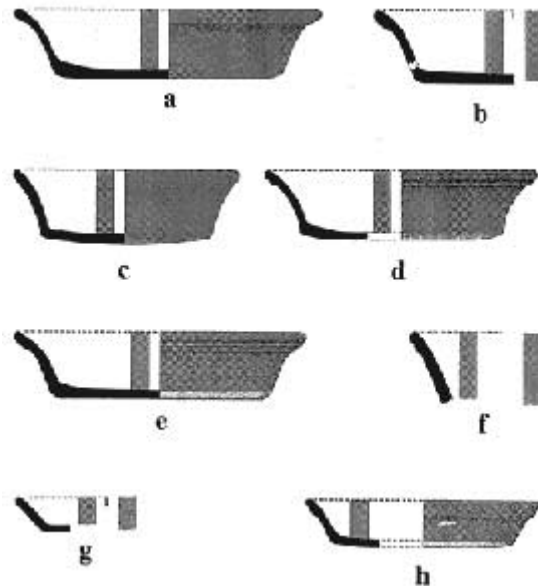


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## **Palenque and Selected Survey Sites in Chiapas and Tabasco: The Preclassic**



**Research Year:** 1998

**Culture:** Maya

**Chronology:** Pre-Classic

**Location:** Chiapas and Tabasco, México

**Sites:** Palenque, Trinidad, Zapatilla, Chinikiha, Paso Nuevo

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## **Abstract**

Archaeological research focused on the major Classic Maya site of Palenque included the occasional recovery of Preclassic remains at various survey sites in Chiapas and Tabasco. Preclassic ceramics at four of these, in addition to Palenque, are considered. The Middle Preclassic is well represented at all sites, a primary subdivision being the appearance of waxy wares. The non-waxy to waxy shift, recalling Xe-Mamom relationships, is more pronounced than changes marking the Middle to Late Preclassic transition. Initial Middle Preclassic similarities tend to be stronger outside the Maya Lowlands than with other Lowland Maya sites, and a few ceramics also have non-Maya Early Preclassic correspondences. Depending in part on the survey site under consideration, Olmec/Greater Isthmian features and Chalchuapa-like treatments are noted. Usually, however, relationships are observed on a modal rather than typological level, perhaps reflecting the reworking of external influences from varied sources and the occasional retention of earlier features as archaisms.

## **Resumen**

La investigación arqueológica enfocada en el mayor sitio Maya Clásico de Palenque incluye la recuperación ocasional de restos Preclásicos en varios sitios examinados en Chiapas y Tabasco. Las cerámicas del Preclásico de cuatro de estos sitios, en adición al de Palenque, son también consideradas. A su vez se observa en todos estos sitios una buena representación del Preclásico Medio, habiendo una primera subdivisión de acuerdo a si cuentan con apariencia de alfarería encerada. El cambio de no-encerado a encerado, aludiendo a una relación con Xe-Mamom, es más notorio que los cambios marcando la transición del Preclásico Medio al Tardío. Las primeras similitudes del Preclásico Medio tienden a ser mucho más fuertes afuera de las Tierras Bajas Maya que con otros sitios de las Tierras Bajas Mayas, unas pocas cerámicas también presentan correspondencia no-Mayas del Preclásico Temprano. Dependiendo en parte del sitio examinado que se considere, se observan rasgos Olmeca/Greater Isthmian y tratamientos de tipo Chalchuapa. Sin embargo usualmente, las relaciones son observadas a nivel modelo más que tipológico, reflejando quizás el re-procesado de influencias externas provenientes de varias fuentes y la ocasional retención de rasgos tempranos tales como el arcaísmo.

Robert L. Rands and Ronald L. Bishop are co-authors of "The Dish-Plate Tradition at Palenque: Continuity and Change." In *Patterns and Process: A Festschrift in Honor of Dr. Edward V. Sayre*, edited by Lambertus van Zelst. This paper was published by

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*Submitted 06/24/2002 by:*  
Robert L. Rands

## **Introduction**

This report was made possible by a grant from The Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc. (FAMSI).

Line drawings of Preclassic ceramics form the framework around which the report is organized. A small subset of pottery is considered from Palenque and four survey sites in northeastern Chiapas and adjacent Tabasco, México. Fieldwork, carried out between the 1950s and 1970s, was oriented toward Palenque, dealing with centralization as inferred from ceramic production and exchange. Inasmuch as Palenque gained special prominence among Lowland Maya sites in the Late Classic period, research has focused on materials later in time than those presented here.

Preclassic pottery was obtained in small quantities at a number of locations, the present coverage being somewhat selective. To the north of Palenque, lying on or near the Usumacinta River, are Trinidad and Zapatillo (the latter also referred to as Nueva Esperanza). To the south and east are Chinikiha and Paso Nuevo. Distances from Palenque are generally in the 40 to 45 km range, although Paso Nuevo is closer, approximately 10 km away ([Figure 1](#)).

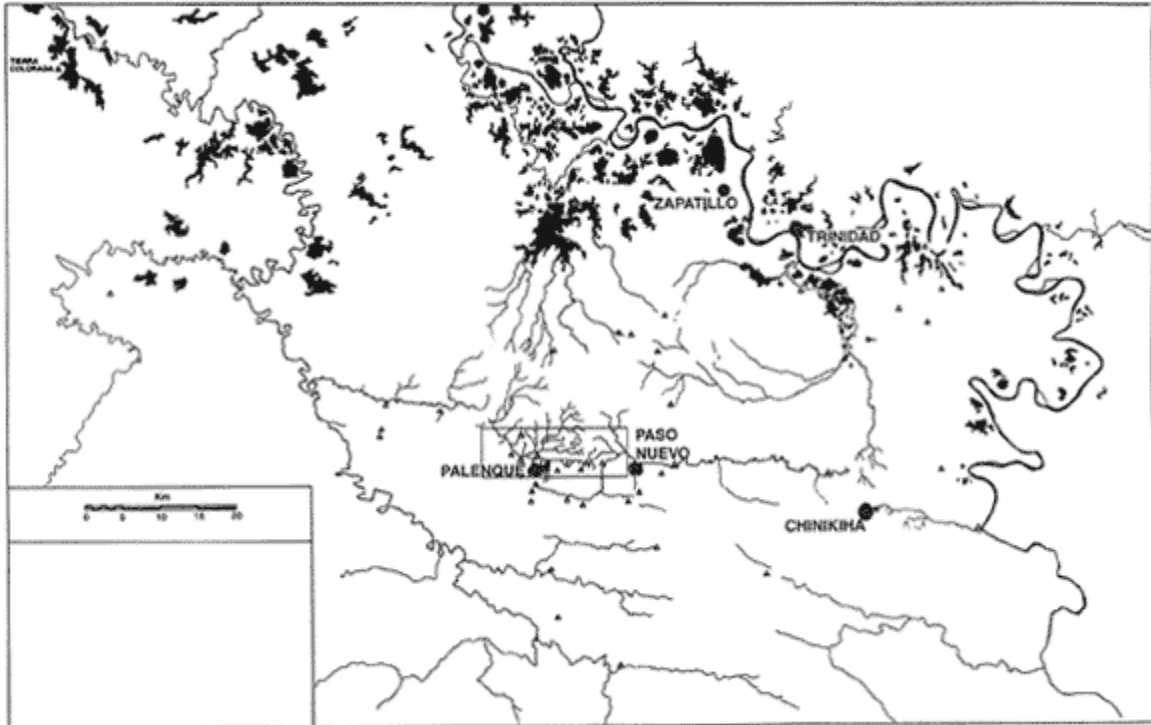


Figure 1. Map of Palenque and selected survey sites in Chiapas and Tabasco.

## Trinidad

The Preclassic at Trinidad has been reported on in greatest detail. Early to late, it is sequenced as the Chiuwaan, Xot, and Chacibcan ceramic complexes, with a provisionally named Bacha floating somewhere between or overlapping Chiuwaan and Xot (Rands, 1969; 1987). All fall within the broadly defined Middle Preclassic period. Except for Chacibcan, the Preclassic ceramics are mostly from mound fill, underlying Classic pottery, at a depth of approximately 3 to 6 meters. In this churned fill situation, crossties from outside the survey provide the major basis for chronological partition. Seriation also indicates developmental trends but tends to be specific to a given form class rather than integrating a number of these classes into sharply defined complexes.

Chiuwaan. Chronologically, Chiuwaan is early in the Middle Preclassic. In personal communications from a number of years ago, Jerry Sabloff saw Chiuwaan ceramics as a Xe equivalent at Seibal and Mike Coe considered some of the same sherds as close to Nacaste at San Lorenzo. These observations illustrate, for what has traditionally become known as the "Northwestern Zone" of the southern Maya Lowlands (see Culbert, 1973:Fig. 1), that cultural correspondences at the beginning of the Middle Preclassic extended within the Maya area to the southeast and to the Olmec in the west.

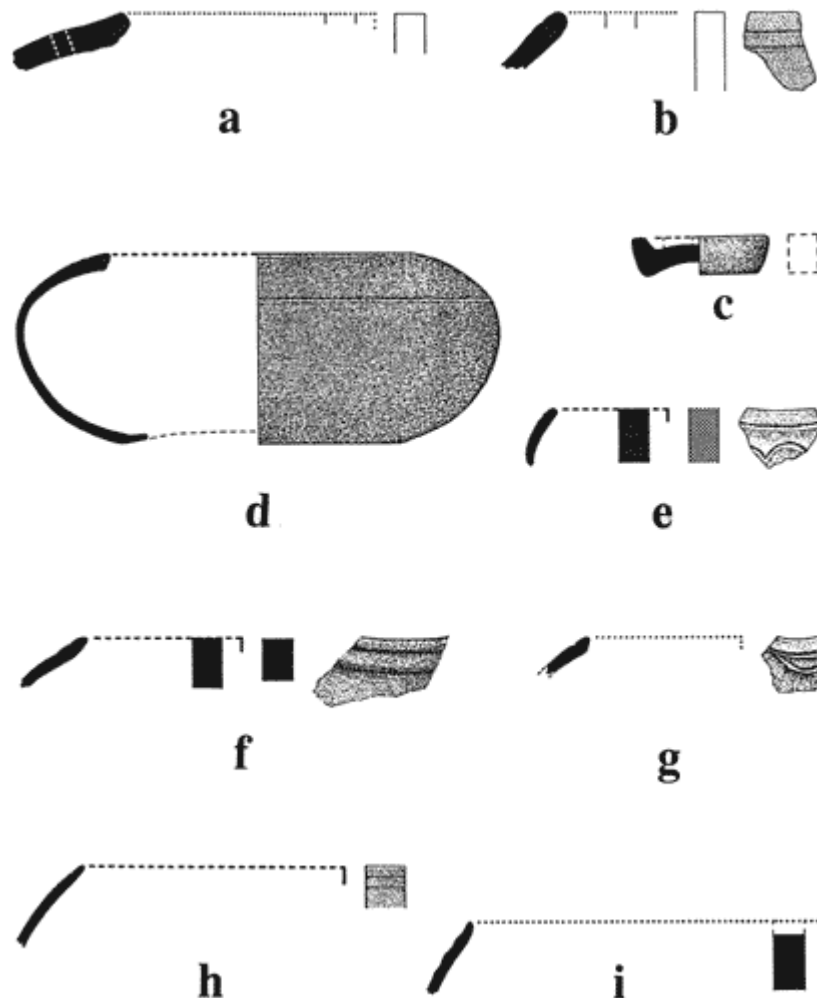


Figure 2. Trinidad, Chiuuan Phase.

For the most part, [Figure 2](#) shows thick and thin tecomates and restricted bowls approaching tecomates. White slipped *a-c* may be earlier than most of the other sherds. For example, *c* corresponds closely to La Mina White convex-base miniatures identified as "paint dishes" from the San Lorenzo phase (Coe and Diehl, 1980:Fig. 159a-d); the thick, perforated white-slipped tecomate (*a*) may equate with Camalote White of the succeeding Nacaste phase, perforation of tecomates extending farther back in time. Horizontally ovoid, *d* is subglobular with an essentially flat base.

Much of the material in [Figure 2](#) can be placed early in the Middle Preclassic. Connecting arcs in *e* and the strong occurrence of black, including white-rimmed black (*i*) are common at this time (Green and Lowe, 1967:67). Fluting (*f*) is well represented in tecomates and near-tecomates at Trinidad.

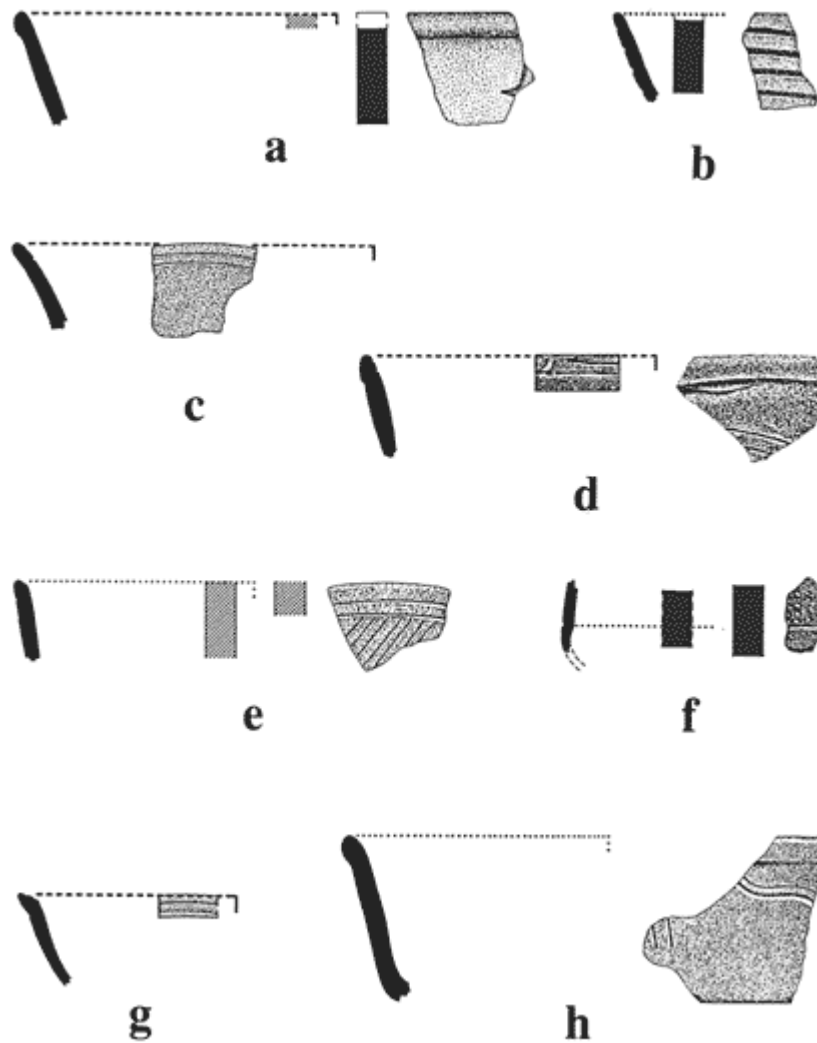


Figure 3. Trinidad, Chiuuan Phase.

In general, [Figure 3](#) illustrates slightly flared dishes or bowls of simple silhouette. Black is important, including white-rim black (*a*, *b*). Otherwise, slipped surfaces are rare (*e* is non-waxy orange). The double-line break is present (*d* and potentially *c*), and a field of incised diagonal lines also occurs (*e*); both are important in the Middle Preclassic (e.g., the Nacaste phase at San Lorenzo, Coe and Diehl, 1980:Fig. 164). Incising includes motifs of great time range, including the sine curve (*h*; compare Lowe, 1989:Fig. 4.9) and, in *a*, a fragmentary design having probable relationship to that shown, e.g., by Ekholm (1969:Figs. 35i, 45h, 48h, 57g) at Izapa. Although unreliable for crossdating, these motifs are not at home in the Maya Lowlands, suggesting Greater Isthmian prototypes. A temporal position early in the Middle Preclassic again seems to fit. As

sampled, the absence of features such as carving and red-banded or rocker-stamped tecomates precludes a substantial Early Preclassic occupation.

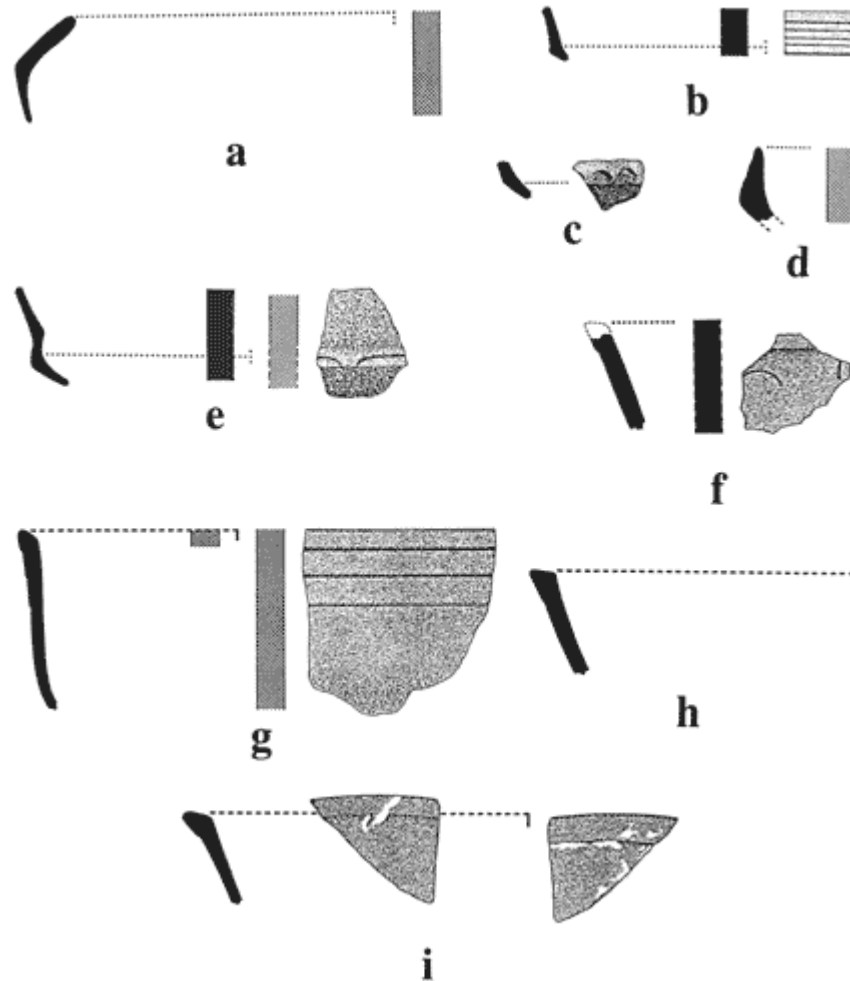
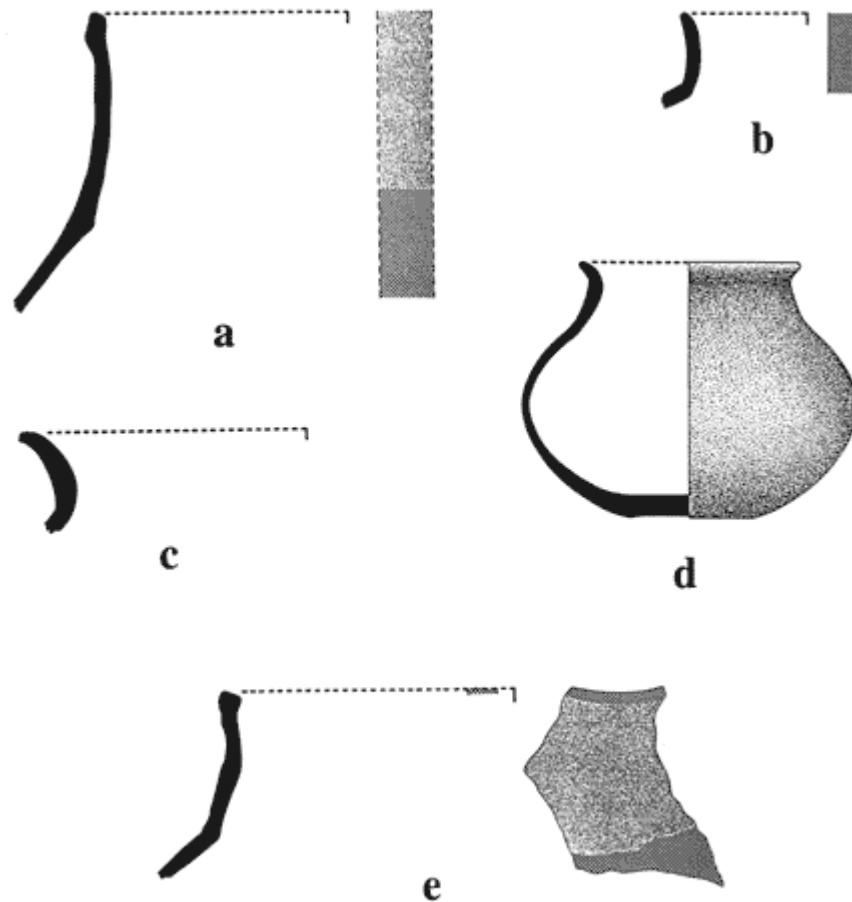


Figure 4. Trinidad: a-e, Chiuuan Phase; f-i, Bacha Phase (provisional).

Angled or composite silhouette bowls are also present in Chiuuan ceramics ([Figure 4a-e](#)). Non-waxy red (exterior) and black (interior) are common, the single-line break (e), impressed half-circles (c), and a horizontal groove-incised field (b) also occurring. Sharply thinned toward the rim, *d* recalls various Early Preclassic sherds, although these are mostly flat-based simple silhouettes. Angled sherds of this shape occur, however, in the Duende phase at Izapa (Ekholm, 1969:Fig. 62o, 63m).

Bacha. As noted, this attempt at temporal discrimination is provisional, lacking stratigraphic substantiation. Nevertheless, the flared bowl with rim molding and interior-beveled rim ([Figure 4f-i](#)) is highly distinctive. In this shape class, the incised arc of *f* is

an early Middle Preclassic treatment (pointing toward Chiuwaan) and the cloudy resist in *i*, although differing in the absence of slipped surfaces, suggests Xot (later in the Middle Preclassic).



**Figure 5. Trinidad Jars.**

*Jars* (Figure 5). The mixed fill again poses problems for a temporal separation. A complete, unslipped jar from a Chacibcan level (*d*) does, however, provide an anchor for seriation at the close of the sampled Preclassic occupation. Contrasting sharply in treatment and abundance are high-neck jars with interior-faceted rims, unobliterated coiling marks, and red daub exteriors (*a*, *e*). Due to similarities in surface treatment to Mamom Palma Daub, I was first inclined to place these on a Mamom level—i.e., a temporal equivalent of Xot. To do so, however, introduces complexity into what otherwise would be a smooth development (*b-c-d*).



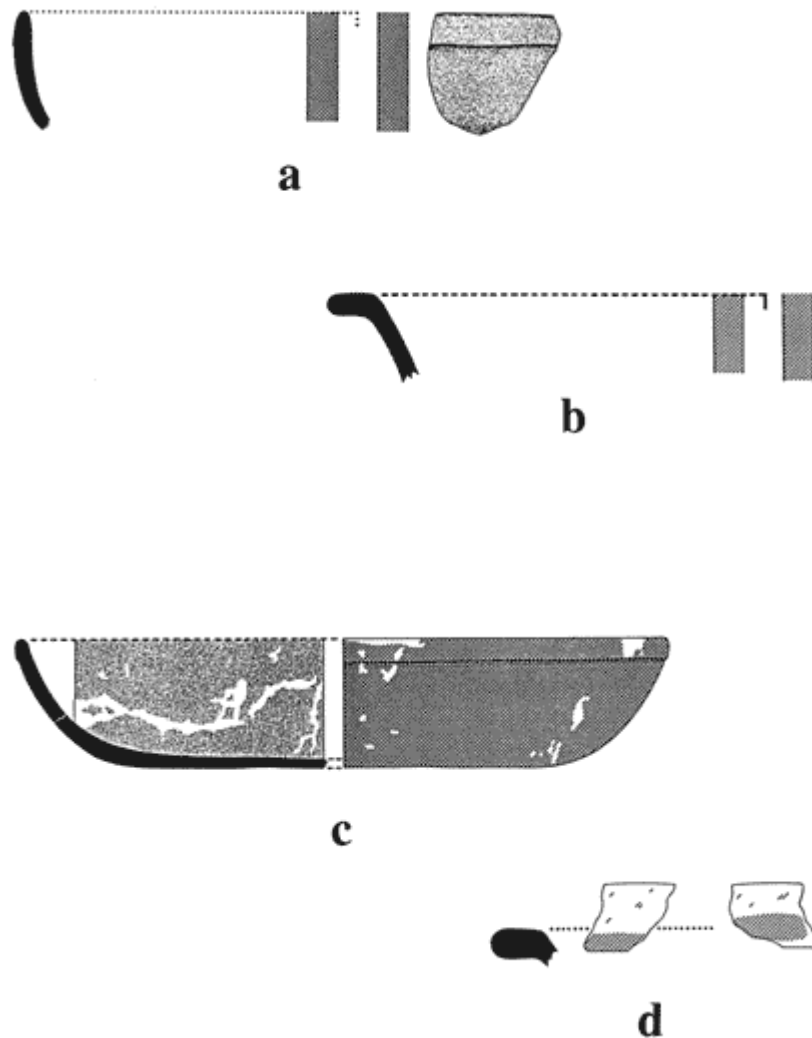


Figure 6. Trinidad: a, c, Xot Phase; b, d, Chacibcan Phase.

*Xot.* Xot ceramics are well represented in the mound fill and elsewhere at Trinidad but show less variation than Chiuuan, the latter perhaps covering a wider span of time that is potentially subject to subdivision. Rounded shallow dishes, often with a very low height:diameter ratio, are a major characteristic of Xot (Figure 6a, c). These are usually red slipped (non-waxy), occasionally with one or two incised horizontal lines below the rim. Cloudy, blotchy resist occurs (c), generally on a well-smoothed but unslipped interior and a red-slipped exterior. Volcanic-bearing pastes continue, although a greater admixture of quartz sand is sometimes noted.

*Chacibcan.* Set apart stratigraphically from the earlier ceramics, Chacibcan is not well represented. Changes are marked. Appearances include a lustrous orange, waxy slip; comparatively thick dishes with flared, everted rims (Figure 6b) and carbonate temper (striking due to the inaccessibility of limestone in the alluvial floodplain environment of

Trinidad). Perhaps the small amount of volcanic ash-tempered pottery bearing a waxy red slip (not illustrated) also is to be placed in Chacibcan. Cloudy resist, now slipped on both the interior and exterior (*d*), conforms to Tierra Mojada as described for Seibal in Escoba Mamom (Sabloff, 1975). The thickened everted-rim dish has close shape analogs in the Malecon Complex at Edzná (Forsyth, 1983:Figs. 3z, 6y). In the ceramic sample, Mayanization appears to have been underway at Trinidad during Chacibcan times but was cut short, a near-hiatus occurring from the Middle Preclassic until well into the Classic.

### **Zapatillo (Nueva Esperanza)**

Excavations were limited, most of the pottery being collected from a newly opened road, portions of three mounds having been bulldozed for fill. The possibility of multicomponent mixing is obvious.

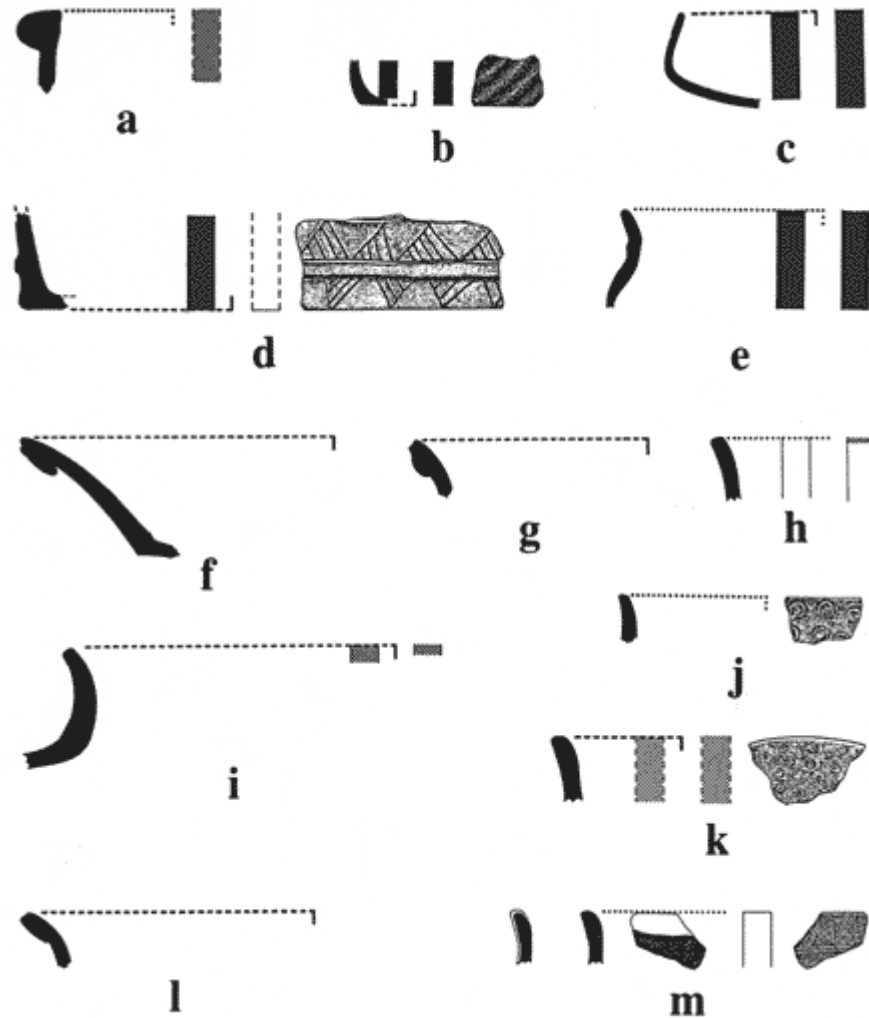


Figure 7. Zapatillo (Nueva Esperanza).

On a modal level, heavy rim bolstering in [Figure 7a](#) recalls Greater Isthmian, including materials of Early and Middle Preclassic date, and Xe. Blacks, some of which are white rimmed, (*7m*), are well represented but form and slip characteristics differ from Trinidad. Also shown in [Figure 7](#), folded rims (*f*, *l*) and circle-impresion (*j*, *k*) are common, the latter sharing attributes of shape with white-slipped ceramics (*h*, *j*, *k*, *m*), the punctate fields being reminiscent of Middle Preclassic at Mirador (Agrinier, 2000:Fig. 62). The jar form (*i*) occurs at Trinidad ([Figure 5c](#)) and widely throughout the survey region, usually with volcanic ash or pumice temper. More elaborate, the shape of the black jar in *e* is almost duplicated in [Figure 8c](#), also from Zapatillo. [Figure 7d](#) strongly resembles a cache vessel from Chiapa de Corzo, dated as Jiquipilas (Mason, 1960:Fig. 9b) and stylistically similar materials from, for example, Tres Zapotes (Weiant, 1943:Fig. 22). In general, connections of the [Figure 7](#) ceramics seem to be primarily to the west, rather than with the Maya Lowlands.

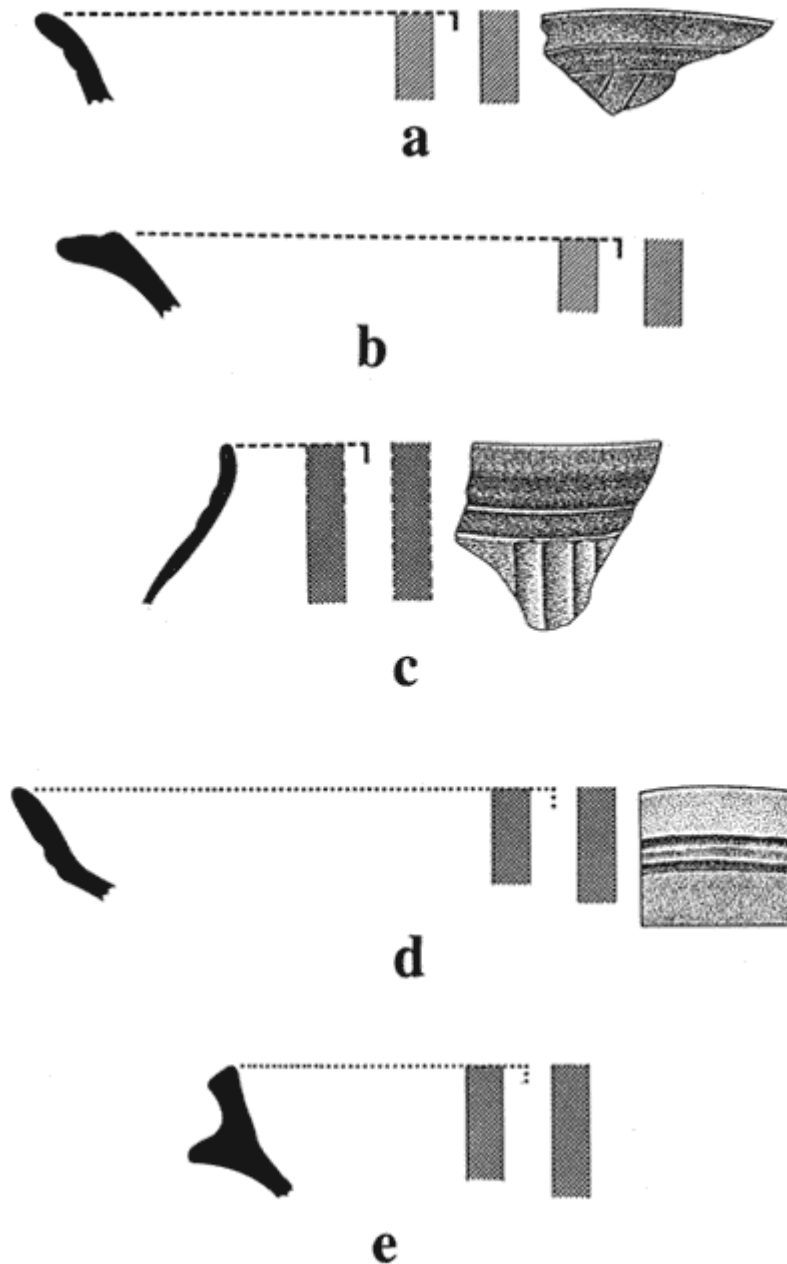


Figure 8. Zapatillo.

Lowland Maya affiliations are stronger in the waxy, red-slipped pottery of [Figure 8](#), some examples relating to the Late Preclassic. Thus, *d* can be equated with Laguna Verde Incised and the medial-flange sherd in *e* with Sierra Red. The red jar (*c*), referred to above ([Figure 7e](#)), has localized characteristics, including shape and precisely executed fluting.

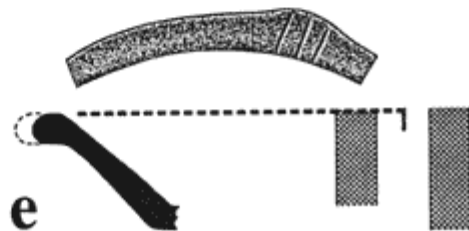
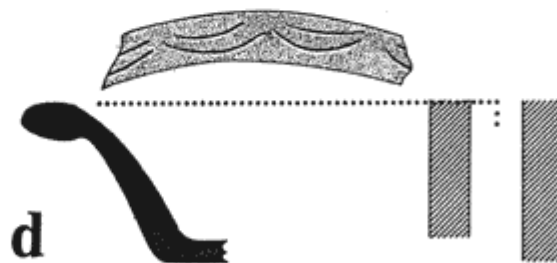
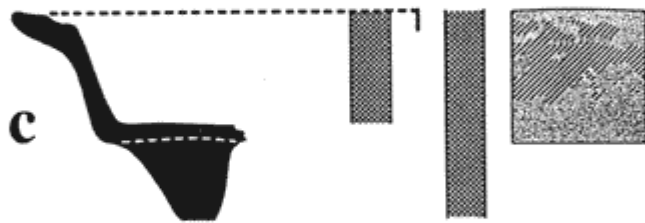
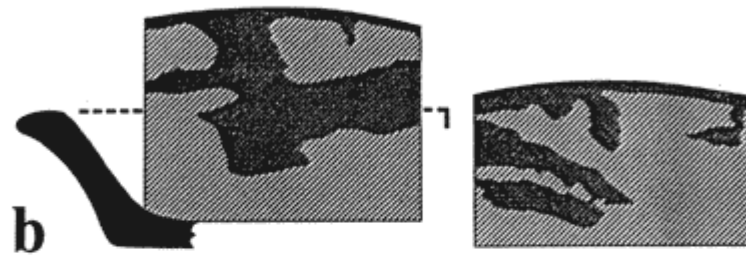
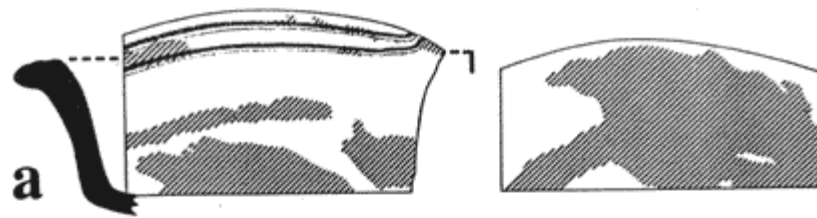


Figure 9. Zapatillo.

Fairly late in the Middle Preclassic—at least as seen from a Southeastern Mesoamerican perspective—sherds in [Figure 9](#) extend the ceramic repertoire at Zapatillo. Cloudy resist, flared-wall dishes (*a-c*) and elaborations of everted rims, including groove-incising and rim tabs (*d, e*) are common. Slips are waxy, *a* corresponding to the double-slipped Tierra Mojada Group, as described for Escoba Mamom at Seibal (Sabloff, 1975) and to Chiapa III materials, the double-line break, generally ascribable to Xe rather than Mamom in the Maya Lowlands, being present (cf. Adams, 1971:Figs. 1gg, hh, 7i). Variations of the cloudy resist technique occur: *b* is a smudged orange resist with blobs and trickles, and *c* has a mainly red surface with orange showing through. In a strong pattern as observed for Zapatillo, orange is largely restricted to cloudy resist, most of the waxy slips being red. For the widespread occurrence of cloudy resist, (see e.g., Lowe, 1977:223-224; Demarest and Sharer, 1982; Demarest, 1986; Andrews V, 1986:33; Brady *et al.*, 1998:20, Fig. 2).

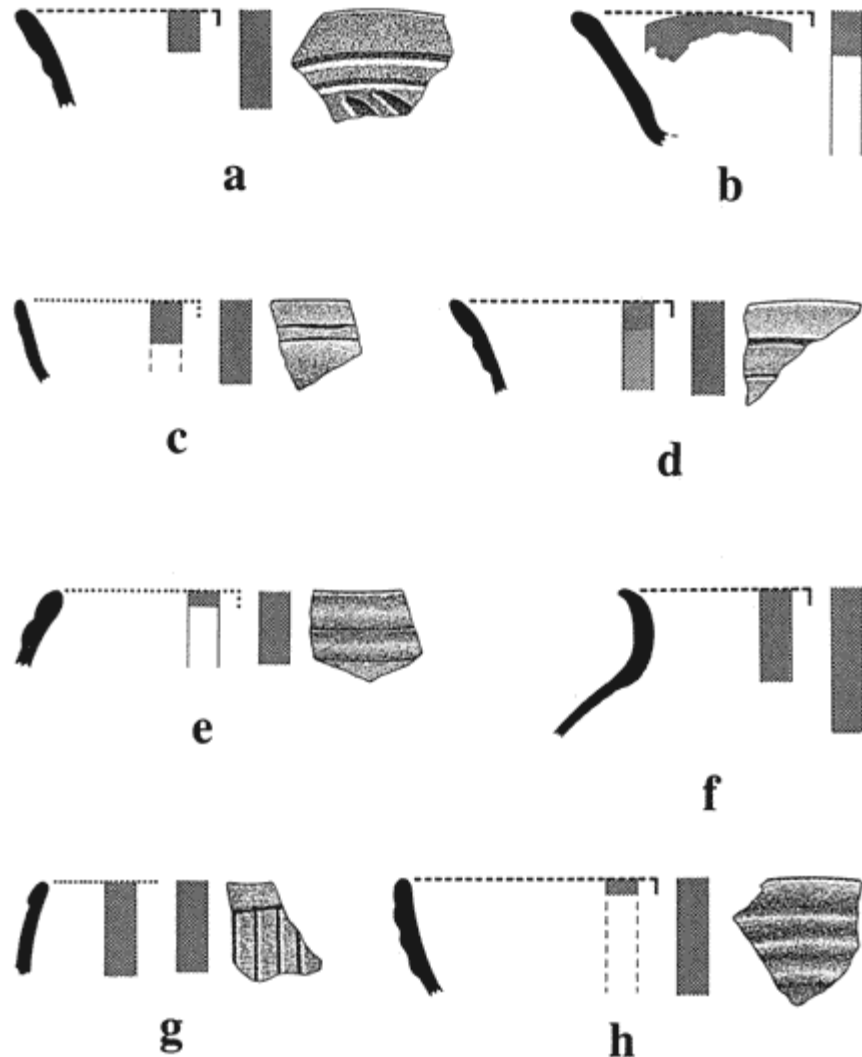


Figure 10. Zapatillo: a-g, Specular Hematite Red; h, Style of Specular Red.

The presence of specular hematite red slip, which sparkles when turned to the light, is of special interest ([Figure 10a-g](#)). Its Preclassic associations are mostly early—a broad Ocos horizon, concentrated on the Pacific Coast of Chiapas and Guatemala, with extensions as far as Oaxaca and the Tehuacan Valley. Closer to Zapatillo, specular red occurs not only in the Mal Paso region but at La Venta and Tres Zapotes. At La Venta it is recorded only in passing by Drucker (1952:96) but is considered at greater length on reexamination by Will Andrews (Andrews V, 1990:34, 43, Fig. 11g, h). According to Andrews, the La Venta-Tres Zapotes specular reds differ in slip and rim forms from Early Preclassic examples at Ocos, being "more appropriate" for the Middle Preclassic.

Absence of "gadroned" lips and general simplification of rims set the Zapatillo specular reds apart from the Ocos horizon (contrast [Figure 10a-g](#) with, for example, Coe, 1961:Fig. 19; Ekholm, 1969:Fig. 25; Ceja Tenorio, 1985:Fig. 39q-aaa). Although fragmentary, a and d are possible cuspidors. Incising and groove-incising, mostly horizontal, characterize the rather small sample. Almost all sherds have a hard, dark over-all red exterior slip, the interior combining red below the rim with white or light buff. This pattern is present on non-specular red (*h*). Somewhat divergent, the specular red is weaker in g, the incurved wall has a lightly bolstered rim, and vertical rather than horizontal groove-incising is present.

In summary, as sampled, Zapatillo includes sparse ceramics dating back to a Chiuaan-like horizon with linkages outside the Maya Lowlands, undergoes apparent intensification and "Mayanization" later in the Middle Preclassic, and continues into the Late Preclassic. To suggest ceramic complex names for these developments would be unwarranted at the present time, however, in view of sample size and lack of stratigraphic control.

## **Chinikiha**

Small quantities of Preclassic ceramics were obtained from several mixed deposits, notably caves. Correspondences are close to the high-neck daub jars of Trinidad, although at Chinikiha red completely covers the sherd exterior ([Figure 11a, b](#)). Aside from Tierra Blanca, an Usumacinta site just upstream from Trinidad, Chinikiha is the only other site in the survey region where this daubed, volcanic-glass bearing type is known.

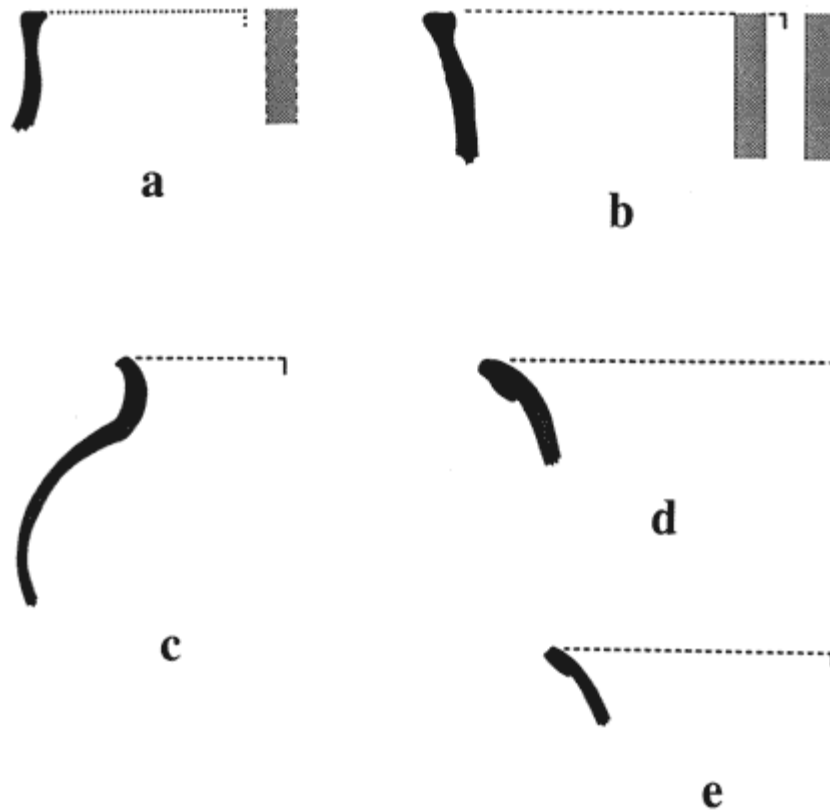


Figure 11. Chinikiha.

Other Preclassic jars from Chinikiha are shown in (Figure 11c-e). Widely distributed in the survey region, the shape class in c occurs, with only slight variation, at Trinidad (Figure 5c), Zapatillo (Figure 7l), Paso Nuevo (Figure 15f, j), and Palenque (Figure 18c). Volcanic ash temper is characteristic. Fluted rim moldings (Figure 11d) are also known on jars from Palenque, the form being relatively less common there, however, than at Chinikiha; coarse carbonate temper is usual. With folded rim and slightly grooved lip, the Chinikiha jar in Figure 11e is closely paralleled at Zapatillo (Figure 7l) and (not illustrated) at Palenque; again carbonate temper is characteristic. Chinikiha, therefore, is important for its intraregional ceramic cross-ties. Figure 12 expands comparative material from the site on an interregional basis.



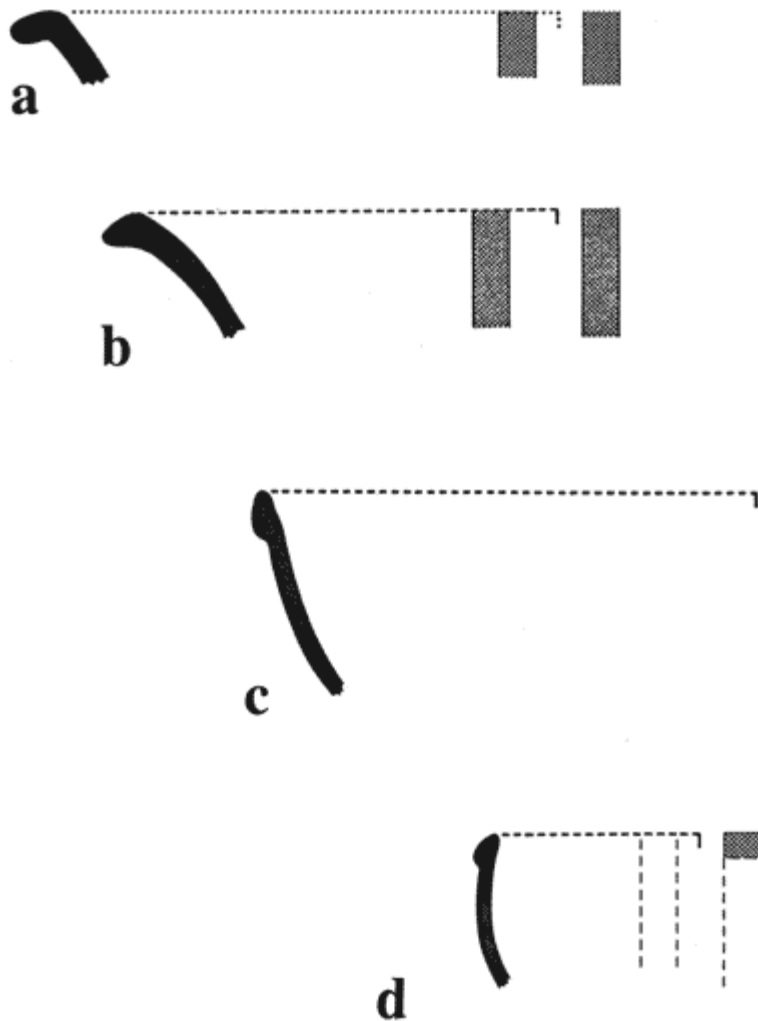


Figure 12. Chinikiha.

In discussing affiliations between Komchen and La Venta, Will Andrews (Andrews V, 1986:34-39, 4d3, Figs. 11b, i, k and 12d-m) illustrates sharply everted and downturned dish rims; dates may be on the order of B.C. 600/500 to 400/300. Perhaps slightly less strongly, Chinikiha dishes also fit into his illustrated range ([Figure 12a, b](#)), and a generally similar form occurs at Palenque ([Figure 16f](#)). At least occasional ceramics from the Palenque survey seem to reflect the inferred contacts, perhaps rendering unnecessary the direct seagoing route between the Olmec area and Yucatán posited by Andrews (1986:41-42).

The possibility of Olmec-Chinikiha affiliations is strengthened, on at least a modal (shape) level ([Figure 12c, d](#)). Nuances of rim and wall curvature correspond closely to types of the San Lorenzo phase, as known both at the type site (Coe and Diehl, 1980:Fig. 154) and at Mirador (Agrinier, 1984:Fig. 36w). Red-on-white is also shared in

this form class (d) and for the early Olmec horizon we may approach a typological, rather than simply modal, level of comparative analysis.

### Paso Nuevo

Paso Nuevo is geographically much closer to Palenque than the other survey sites considered here. Most Preclassic ceramics from Paso Nuevo are from a low platform, slightly less than a meter in height. A stone retaining wall, at one end of the platform, contained five stacked dishes (Figure 13a-e). This cache should provide a minimal date for the platform and its redeposited, multicomponent sherds. The dishes are similar: waxy red slip (interior and exterior); flat base; flared walls with outturned rims; and rim moldings that are sometimes groove-incised. Generally similar ceramics occur in the mound fill (Figure 13g, h).

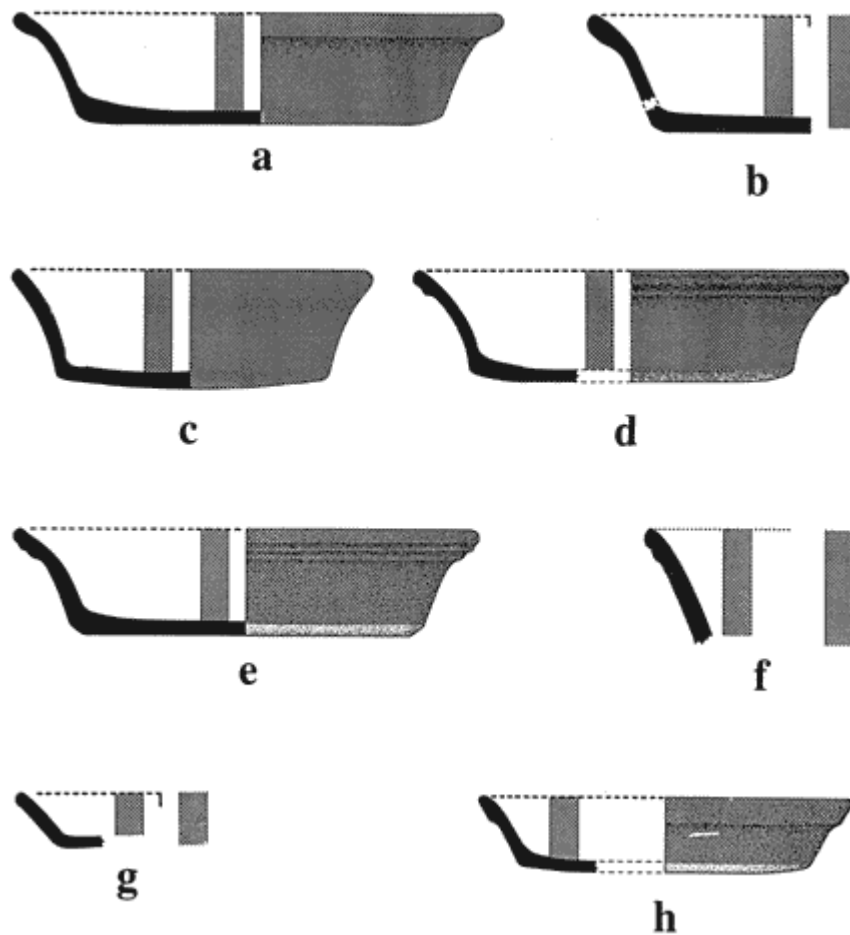


Figure 13. Paso Nuevo.

Earlier ceramics are abundant in the fill ([Figure 14](#)). The exterior thickened band in *a* slants downward, the tecomate otherwise resembling, for example, ceramics of the Duende phase at Izapa (Ekholm, 1969:Fig. 66w) and Tok at Chalchuapa (Sharer, 1978:Figs. 6a3, g5). Sharply incurved, *c* also has Tok-Colas correspondences at Chalchuapa (Sharer, 1978:Figs. 6a2, g5, 7f, 10, 11), and *d* is Xe-like. White slips (*a*, *e*-*g*), sometimes with a fugitive, mottled black interior, also contrast with the Paso Nuevo cache vessels and with the thickened, everted, or bolstered forms shown elsewhere in [Figure 14](#) (see Lowe, 1978:360-362 for a discussion of Middle Preclassic white wares). In *n* the rim is interior faceted, a closely similar red sherd being illustrated for Palenque ([Figure 16i](#)). [Figure 14m](#) resembles ceramics from Zapatillo and Chinikiha ([Figure 7i](#), [Figure 11e](#)). Incised semicircles have analogs at Trinidad (cf. [Figure 4c](#), [Figure 14h](#)); for concentric squiggles ([Figure 14k](#)) compare the Cantera phase at Chalcatzingo (Cyphers Guillen, 1987:Fig. 13.26). Similarities are widespread on a modal level, ranging from the Early to Middle Preclassic.

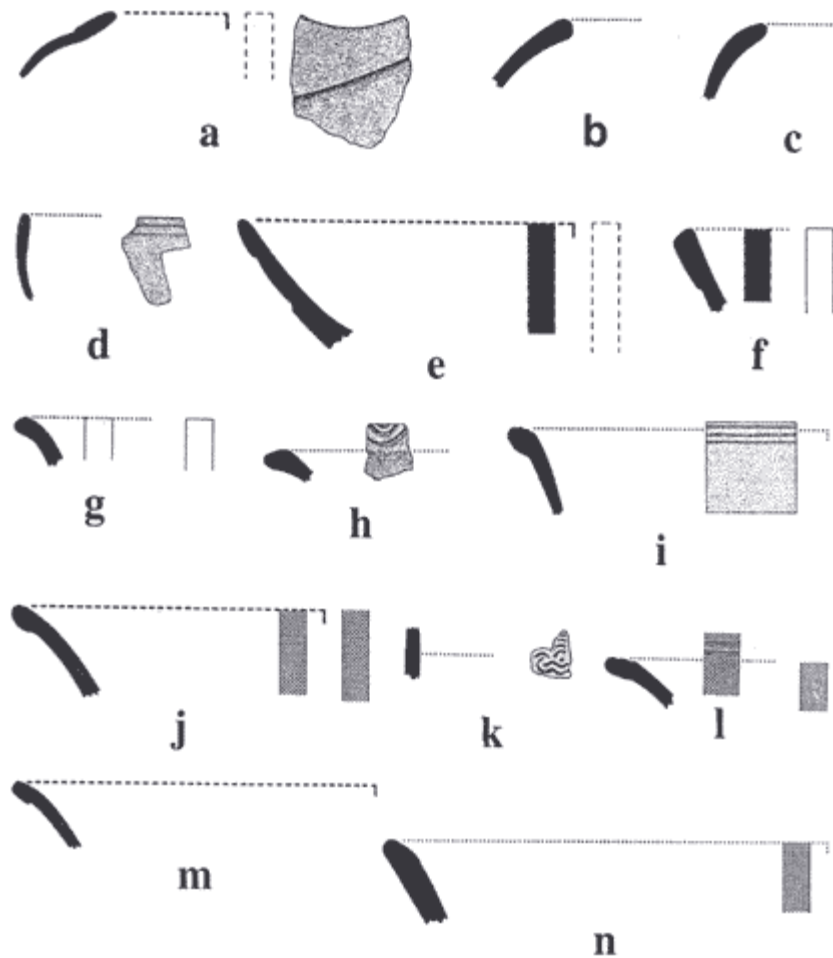


Figure 14. Paso Nuevo.

Jars from Paso Nuevo are shown in [Figure 15](#). Generalized shape classes are high-necked with gentle curvature (*a-c*); low, flared to curving necks (*d-f, j*); and thick, coarsely finished high-neck jars flaring toward exterior-faceted rims (*g-i*). Exterior beveled rims (*a-c, g-i*) occur in other form classes at Paso Nuevo ([Figure 14f, m](#)) and may be seen as a characteristic of the site, replicating, for example, their prominence at Chalchuapa in the Tok, Colas and Kal phases (Sharer, 1978:Table 3B7, Figs. 6a, 7d-f, 8a); also compare jars at Tres Zapotes (Drucker, 1943:Fig. 19). The tapering, long-neck jar ([Figure 15a](#)) approaches a La Venta bottle form (cf. Drucker, 1943:118, Fig. 39d) and Middle to Late Preclassic Mal Paso materials (Lee, 1974:Fig. 43b); see also earlier ceramics in Coe and Diehl (1980); Sisson, (1976); and comments by Lowe (1978). White or red-on-white jars are common at Paso Nuevo ([Figure 15b, c, e, f](#)); conversely, *h* is a rare example of brushing and *j* is bituminous. The strap handle (*b*) is very rare in the Palenque survey and, generally, in the west (see Lowe, 1978:347). Compared to Chiuwaan at Trinidad and some of the Zapatillo ceramics, black is rare at Paso Nuevo and, when present, tends to be distinctive, sometimes recalling the fugitive mottled black-and-whites seen in ([Figure 14e, f](#)).

At Paso Nuevo, as in other survey sites considered here, modal similarities suggest relationships outside the Maya Lowlands on early Middle Preclassic and even Early Preclassic levels, followed by ceramics more characteristic of the late Middle to Late Preclassic. The appearance of waxy-surfaced pottery, primarily red but lacking some of the more distinctive features of Sierra Red, appears pivotal, transcending even the Early and Middle Preclassic distinctions. This said, the apparent absence of a number of Early Preclassic diagnostics constitutes an argument against a pervasive occupation at that time.

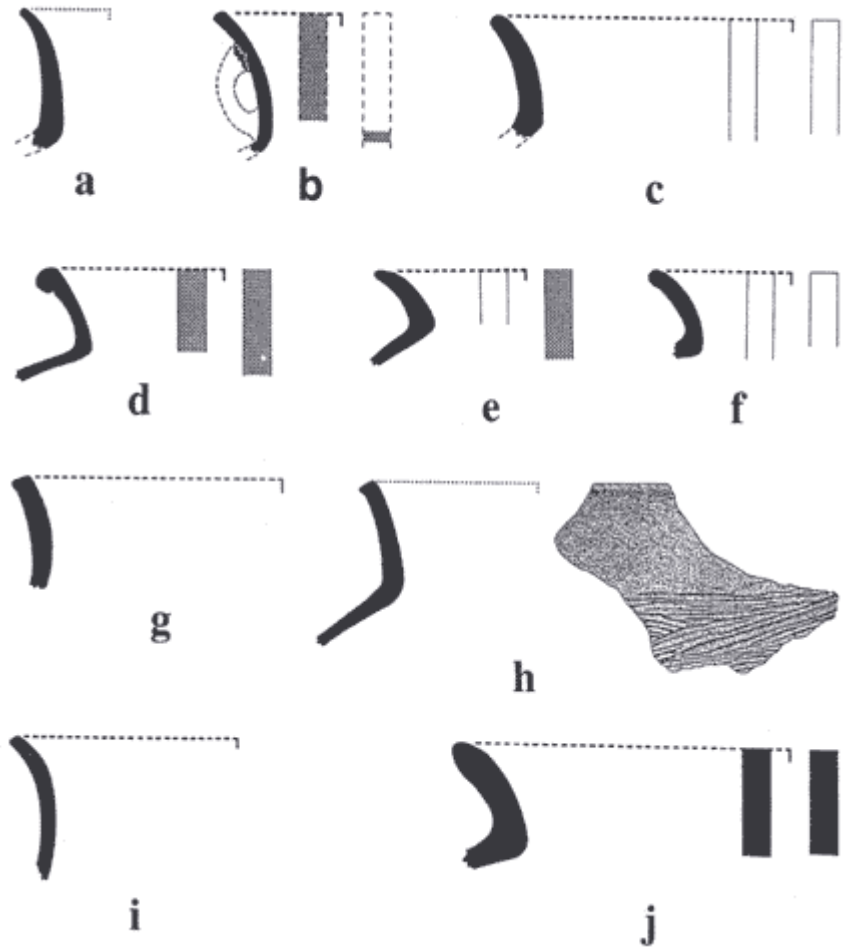


Figure 15. Paso Nuevo.

## Palenque

Most Preclassic pottery known at Palenque has been subject to marked redeposition and breakage. The lack of extensive penetration of sealed deposits has contributed to the failure to define ceramic complexes for the period. However, time depth is present.

This is seen especially in [Figure 16](#). Tecomates, although highly fragmentary, occur in thick and thin forms (*a, b*). Simple in silhouette, *d* is Xe-like. Waxy slips, when present, are almost exclusively red (*e-k*). The labial-flange sherd (*k*) helps to identify the poorly represented Chicanel horizon. Although this is speculative, *j*, with a field of cursive preslipped incised lines, might in some remote way draw inspiration from the wavy lines of Usulután. In other treatments, comparisons are close to Paso Nuevo ([Figure 14n](#), [Figure 16i](#)) and extend to Chinikiha ([Figure 12a, b](#), [Figure 16f](#)). Vertically groove-incised, *h* may anticipate an Early Classic (Picota phase) treatment at Palenque.

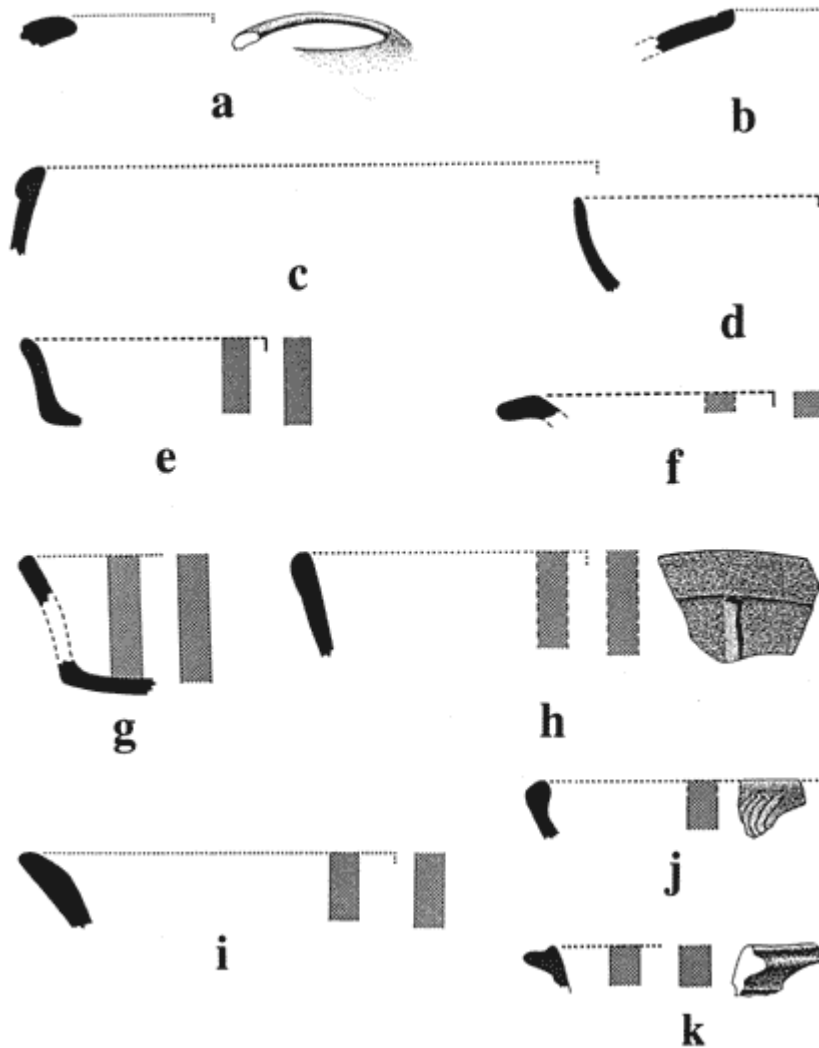


Figure 16. Palenque.

Preclassic examples of wide-everted rim dishes, usually slightly upturned, are given in [Figure 17](#). The thick-walled, shallow to heavily grooved rim (a) is probably earliest; thereafter rims are waxy red, groove-incised, plain, or (in the thin-walled versions of d, e) rectilinear-incised. Years ago I pointed out that at Palenque the Preclassic tradition of everted rims carried over into the Classic, undergoing changes in intensity and type of elaboration but, on early Late Classic polychromes, closely paralleling Preclassic shapes (Rands, 1961).

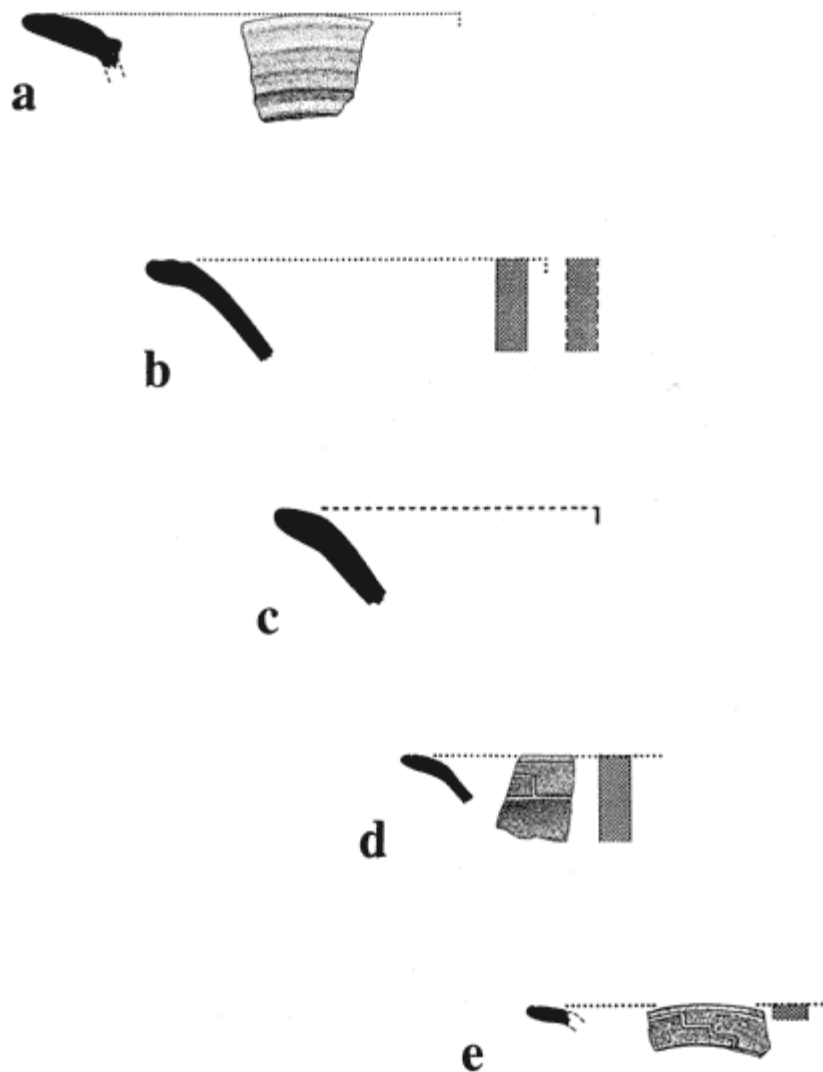


Figure 17. Palenque.

Preclassic Palenque jars are illustrated in [Figure 18](#). Most are apparently unslipped—many surfaces are gone—but *a*, *b* are waxy red and may well be earlier than *d*-*g*. The flared rim with vertical neck and horizontal upper wall (*b*) corresponds closely in shape to Lowe's "Initial Olmec" (1989:Fig. 4.3—the San Lorenzo phase of Coe and Diehl, 1980:Fig 149g). Intraregional correspondences are also illustrated: *c* is widespread (see comparisons given for Chinikiha); *d* has a more limited range but likewise is present at Chinikiha ([Figure 11d](#)); outside Palenque, *e*-*g* is best known at Paso Nuevo.

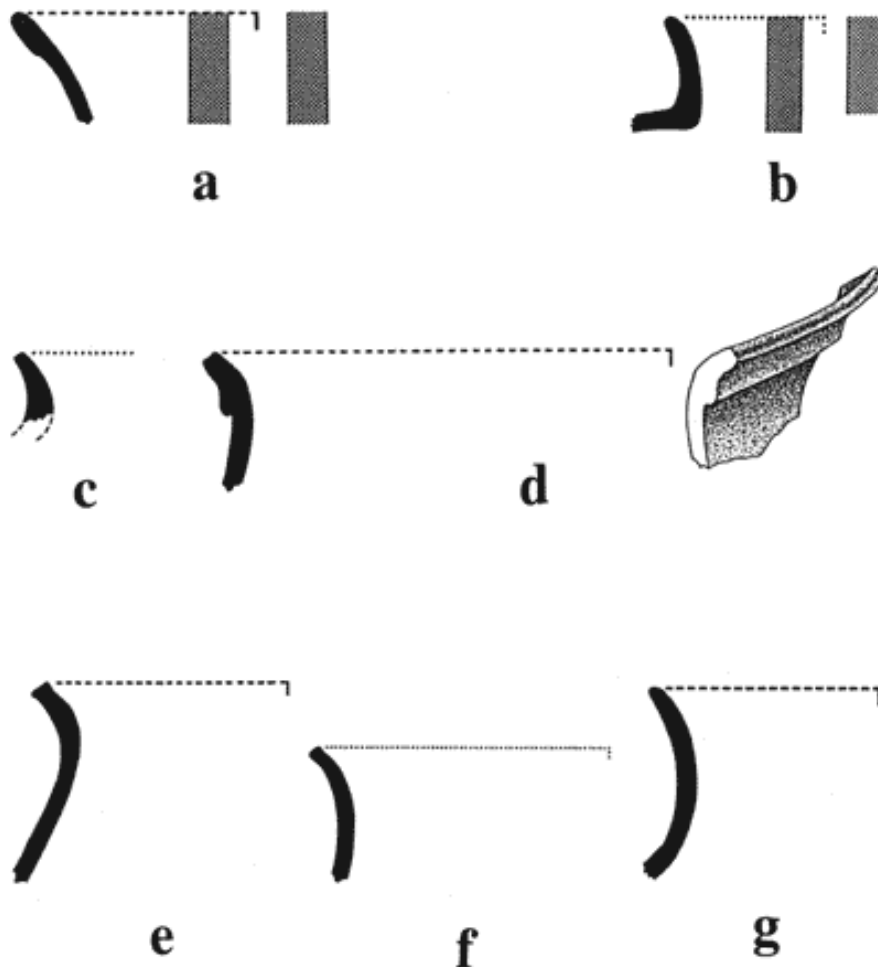


Figure 18. Palenque.

### Methodology and Closing Comments

The extended discussion given to Preclassic jars merits attention, the shape class, especially if unslipped, usually playing a limited role in type-variety analyses of Maya ceramics. The Palenque focus of my investigation is a partial reason for this emphasis. Due to the extensive loss of surface finish, chronological partition at the site is heavily weighted toward unslipped pottery or toward sherds on which slip characteristics cannot be determined. This has carried over into shape-oriented comparisons outside Palenque.

Beyond this, shape carries a significance that is often overlooked. On a broad level, form classes are related to use or function as opposed to the construction of chronologies (cf. Dunnell, 1978). Use imposes constraints, and it is necessary that



these be borne in mind if shape is to be employed as a chronological indicator. Nuances of form must be sought on levels that are reasonably attributed to style, and this requires attention to detail and accurate illustration. Ideally, a constellation of attributes—linking shape, surface finish, color combinations, decoration, and technological features with archaeological context—should be used in chronological partitioning, but, rarely if ever met, this ideal certainly is not achieved here. Instead, modes—too often in isolation rather than showing covariation—have been noted in a conceptual framework organized along broad shape classes.

Modes may well have persisted over substantial periods of time, reappearing as archaisms—traditions of formal, stylistic, and technological mannerisms, presumably reinforced by ideology—that constitute a "pool" of which potters were more or less cognizant and from which, depending in large part on what was fashionable, they drew. As repeatedly noted for Palenque and its environs, the occurrence of ceramic features having their greatest occurrence in the Early Preclassic but apparently in contexts more characteristic of the initial Middle Preclassic perhaps relates to this proposed cultural dynamic. This general phenomenon has been attributed by Demarest (1989:319) to a "common material culture substratum" of the Greater Isthmian region, local variants appearing over a protracted span of time. In any case, many of the observed features seem more at home on the fringes of the Maya area or outside it than within the Maya Lowlands.

## **Key to Illustrations**

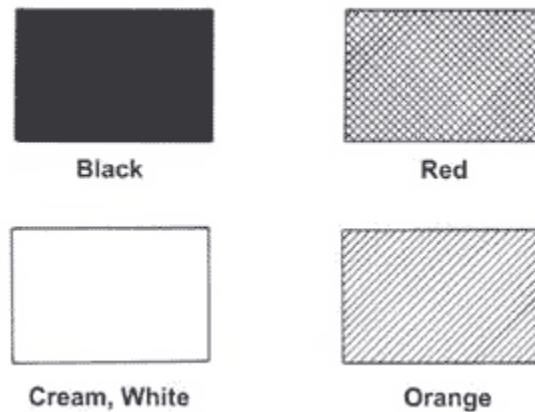
*Scale:* All ceramics illustrated at approximately one-third of natural size.

*Radius:* Width is normally given, dashed lines indicating a close approximation and dotted lines indicating a lower but still reasonable degree of probability. Although also indicating orientation, dotted lines without a vertical marker signal that the radius cannot be approximated.

*Decoration:* Interior decoration is shown in juxtaposition to the radius, exterior decoration being placed to the right.

*Color bars:* Used extensively. Solid framing lines indicate reasonable certainty for slip color. Dashed framing lines have multiple functions, sometimes raising the possibility that additional slip or paint may have been present; in other cases the indicated color is somewhat questionable. Stippling in color bars indicates unslipped areas on a daubed surface.

*Symbols for paint or slip:*



### ***Illustrations***

[Figure 1.](#) Map of Palenque and selected survey sites in Chiapas and Tabasco.

[Figure 2.](#) Trinidad, Chiuwaan Phase.

[Figure 3.](#) Trinidad, Chiuwaan Phase.

[Figure 4.](#) Trinidad: *a-e*, Chiuwaan Phase; *f-i*, Bacha Phase (provisional).

[Figure 5.](#) Trinidad Jars.

[Figure 6.](#) Trinidad: *a, c*, Xot Phase; *b, d*, Chacibcan Phase.

[Figure 7.](#) Zapatillo (Nueva Esperanza).

[Figure 8.](#) Zapatillo.

[Figure 9.](#) Zapatillo.

[Figure 10.](#) Zapatillo: *a-g*, Specular Hematite Red; *h*, Style of Specular Red.

[Figure 11.](#) Chinikiha.

[Figure 12.](#) Chinikiha.

[Figure 13.](#) Paso Nuevo.

[Figure 14.](#) Paso Nuevo.

[Figure 15](#). Paso Nuevo.

[Figure 16](#). Palenque.

[Figure 17](#). Palenque.

[Figure 18](#). Palenque.

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